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OF

FELIX KENT;

OR,

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THE NEW NEIGHBORS.

BY

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CHAPTER I.

12-3-41 Chacville for copy!

TASSO was a pleasant little village, in the central part of New York, surrounded on all sides by high ranges of hills. These hills did not rise up bleak and wild around it; but covered in part with fine primeval forests, richly cultivated fields and orchards, and handsome groups of farm buildings, they gave to the little village a background glorious to look upon. A small stream flowed through it from north to south, upon the banks of which stood a grist-mill, sand-mill, woolen factory, and agricultural manufactory. With these, and its two stores, its one hotel, blacksmith's and shoemaker's, milliner's and dressmaker's shops, and post office, and though last, by no means least, its two or three churches, Tasso, hid away as it was from the great world, was a sort of metropolis to the surrounding country, and a very important, bustling,

busy little place. At one end of the valley, about a mile from the village, was a farm of some ninety or a hundred acres, reaching high up on the hills. The fields were well tilled, the barns and outbuildings quite modern in style, but the house had decidedly an antiquated appearance. It was one of those large, old-fashioned, square houses, with a low, heavy roof, a door in the middle, and two windows on each side of it. Over the door was a small, square porch, with stiff-backed, narrow seats. The general air of uncomfortableness about them would give the impression that they had never been placed there for use, but from some monstrously mistaken idea that they added beauty and respectability to the little solid structure of a porch. The door was seldom entered, to judge from the grass-grown path leading to it, and its great brass knob, looking more like old iron than any thing else. There was a tradition in the neighborhood that this knob had once been bright and shining ; but in the memory of that remarkable personage, "the oldest inhabitant of the place," it had always worn its present dark and sombre hue. The house had once been painted white ; but it was so long ago, that scarce a trace was left to remind one of the fact ; the fence and narrow gate in front had the same dark weather-beaten look of the house, but the smoothly shaven plot of grass

in the yard, the clumps of hardy plants, lilacs, white and yellow lilies, pionies, holly-hocks and sweet williams, the large old fruit trees, carefully pruned, scattered here and there about the house, forming a pleasant shade for it, the well trimmed rows of current, raspberry and gooseberry bushes just on one side in plain view, the glistening window panes, and the general air of thrift about the place, gave it, in spite of its antiquated appearance, an agreeable home look. For ten years Michael Bryan had been the owner of the farm. He was a hard-working, pains-taking man, with but little desire for the glaring paint and white-wash of the village. If the barns and out-buildings were all right, the crops heavy and the harvests fruitful, he tossed his head contemptuously about modern improvements; and declared his old house good enough for a prince. It was roomy, in summer cool and airy, in winter snug and warm; what more did any sensible man, that cared for comfort and not for show, want. Modern improvements indeed! when he had sons and daughters to educate. Better be thinking of putting the "improvements" into their heads, and not tearing down the old house, that was well enough, about their ears, and scattering his money to the four winds to do it, and find, after all his trouble and expense, the new structure wasn't half so handy

and comfortable as the old one. No, he'd do no such thing; any one that didn't like the looks of it might turn their eyes the other way. He walked on, opened the little gate, passed up the path leading to the south side of the house, entered a cool, pleasant and plainly furnished sitting room, and sat down. Laying his hat on the table before him, he took out from his side pocket a letter he had got that morning at the post-office, when he stepped down to the village for his weekly mail—his two newspapers, the one a religious, the other an agricultural sheet. Except the monthly letters from his children in school, letters were something quite out of his run. This morning, when this was handed to him, he looked at it sharply, put it into his pocket, took his papers and left the office. The post mark on it was quite illegible, but the hand was familiar. It was a long time since he had seen it, and it roused painful memories; but blended with them were deep feelings, warming his heart and sending a glow to his sun-browned face. Plain, simple farmer that he was, there were passages in his past that he could never quite calmly go back to; when with all his thrift, all his strong, determined will and iron strength, he was dragged to the brink of the precipice and about to be hurled over; but a hand, a kind, powerful hand was reached forth, caught him, forced him back, and

firmly set him again upon his feet. He never thought of that time that he did not shudder, of that grand, noble old friend that his strong, passionate heart did not bow down to do him homage. He was the steward of God's mercy to him, the reminder of His love and care over His afflicted children.

As you looked at him while he slowly and carefully read his letter, you would not wonder that he preferred to put the "improvements" into the heads of his children instead of upon his old house. He was forty-five or fifty, with a tall, muscular form, dark brown hair and eyes, a broad forehead, that, at first glance, seemed rather retreating; but this was owing to the extreme prominence of the lower part; the eyes peered from a pair of shaggy eyebrows, too sharp and penetrating to be altogether kind or gentle in expression; the nose was straight, with slightly expanded nostrils; the mouth somewhat large, but the lips were thin and tightly compressed; the chin, it was not shaded by beard, square and rather projecting. It was a face indicative of a good share of intelligence, backed by a resolute and determined will. He could be quick and active as the most nervous, and again slow and meditative as the most calm and phlegmatic. You read this in the rapid changes that passed over his countenance at times, and the strong equable

glance of his eye, that seemed to look out with cool contempt or utter indifference on the jarring elements around him. Twice he passed his hand over his face, then he pushed the dark hair from his forehead and called aloud :

“Catharine.”

A little woman plainly and neatly dressed, forty or forty-five, with light brown hair, fair complexion, small delicate features and keen dark blue eyes, came in from the kitchen. Seeing a letter on the table she exclaimed :

“From the boys, Michael?”

“No,” he answered, “nor from Kittie either. It’s from Felix Kent.”

“Felix Kent!” she exclaimed, wildly opening her eyes, “Truly what on earth has he written to you about? and such a long letter too,” she added, glancing at the closely written sheet.

“He is coming here to live—is going to have the old place fixed up, and wants us, if we can, to board the hands. As soon as he hears from me he’s going to send on carpenters, painters and glaziers, so he writes, for he wants to be here and settled by the first of November, if possible, before the real cold weather sets in.”

Mrs. Bryan drew a long breath and looked wiler than ever. “Coming here to Tasso,” she

said, leaning against the tree, and forgetting to sit down, what does it mean, Michael?"

"Nothing, Catharine," he calmly answered, 'only he's failed. Lost every thing but his Tasso farm."

"Failed!" she exclaimed, her cheek paling, and her hands growing cold.

"Yes," Mr. Bryan returned, "it seems he signed for Spafford—"

"And Spafford left him to face the creditors and balance accounts," she exclaimed, indignantly interrupting him.

"No, Catharine, not as you think," he returned. He spoke slowly as if he were trying to suppress some deep feeling. His wife in her agitation did not notice his difficulty of speech, and hastily jumping to a conclusion said, "But it's through Spafford he's lost all."

"Yes," came from the pressed lips.

"And just what he might have expected if he had anything to do with him. Son-in law though he was to him, I could never bear him. There was always something dark and forbidden about him."

"Catharine, stop," his hand was raised reprovingly.

"But I tell you, it's so, Michael. I would as lief trust a dog with a bone as put confidence in

him. Felix Kent ruined, and ruined by him, the villain!" Mrs. Bryan's voice was sharp and clear with the ring of anger and scorn.

Mr. Bryan was wonderfully calm. "Catharine," he said, like one trying to master some powerful emotion, "don't speak so of the dead."

The spark in her eye faded; the flush on her cheek paled. "The dead;" she repeated, in a hushed awe-struck tone.

"Yes, Catharine; Kent tells me he is dead." He mechanically took up the letter, but without looking at it, continued, "I can't make out very clear how it was. He signed for him—that I know—but to what amount, or how the once signing could be so ruinous, he does not say. Spafford, after it, went west, speculated madly, and just when he got everything to the last pinch, and in as miserable a condition as he could, he died. This is what I have made out."

"Does he say that himself, Michael?"

"Kent? no, not a word of it. But from what he does say, I make this out. He speaks of misfortune coming upon him, and not singly, of losing his prosperity through Spafford, and Spafford dying, and his poor wife and children being with him, and the double grief of Florence mourning her husband, and feeling through him her father has been ruined. And then, Catharine, he just says,

"for it was, by signing for him my all has been swept from me. He made a great stroke, it missed, and he did not live long enough to retrieve his mistake; and then in the postscript he adds: In settling up accounts, we found Spafford had been using my credit longer than I knew."

"Why he don't mean he forged his name?"

"I don't know, Catharine, it's a strange blind letter; taken all in all, Kent seems full of something, but is guarded and says little."

"But his letter is long; what has he filled it out with?"

"With beating round his subject, and never coming directly to it. He's failed, and through Spafford; and Spafford is dead, and his wife and children are with him—this much we know, but the particulars are masked."

"Ah, you may depend, Michael, it wouldn't do to talk of them, now that Spafford's gone."

"Because it would reflect too much on the dead?"

"Yes, because it would be no credit to him. He thinks it best to let the sod rest as lightly on him as it will; but it was a sorry day for him that Spafford became his son-in-law, a sorry day for poor Florence that she became his wife. He's gone now, and I know I shouldn't say it, but he was a hard, bitter man, that never let her have a bit of sun-

shine, or know what peace or happiness was after she married him."

"But, Catharine, he's gone now!"

"I know it, and the sting is, he managed to make his very going a source of bitterness to them all." Mrs. Bryan found it impossible to speak in a kind or sympathizing tone. That Homer Spafford had led his wife and her family a pretty life of it with his hatred of her religion, his contempt of her race, his low, narrow-minded prejudice against everything relating to the one, or in any way referring to the other. She had seen him sneer when his wife went to church; and he took it into his precious head to think his dignity suffered when she approached the sacraments, and he forbid her doing it, and kept her wretched and her poor soul hungered and athirst with his cruel tyranny. Felix Kent might have known how it would be when he consented to let her wed him; but rapt up to the clouds, and judging every body by himself, how was he to know what a mean black-hearted villain he was? He only listened to his smooth words, smooth enough then, and in his grand, good-natured way, believed them. He couldn't believe guile of any one, and when Michael there told him he'd live to rue it, only preached him one of his fine sermons about not judging harshly of our neighbor, and hiding his faults and

bearing with them, and doing as we'd be done by All very good in its place, and to be followed and obeyed ; but at the same time we needn't shut our eyes and not know the good from the bad, and be forever led by the nose by the latter. While we are bid to be as innocent as doves, we are in the same breath reminded to be as cunning as serpents. Alas ! for Felix Kent, he was the one without being the other. He should have been both when that Homer Spafford with his black heart and cat-like softness got round that simple girl and made her believe he loved her. Love ! He didn't know the meaning of the word, and if Kent had had one grain of sense he would have known it, and saved his child and himself a world of trouble. Mrs. Bryan had sunk on a chair, and her face, with its clear sharp eyes, wore a vexed, hard look. Mr. Bryan rose, walked to the door, and glanced fixedly at the old tree just before it, as if studying out some difficult problem in its wide-spreading branches. The sun shining on them, cast dancing shadows on his tall, straight form. He raised his hand to the door, and stood leaning thoughtfully against the door-case. Mrs. Bryan spoke.

"You blame me," she said, "because I can't feel one way and speak any other about him."

"No, Catharine," he answered, "I was thinking

in what a strange way Kent speaks of poor Florence."

"Why, what on earth does he say about her."

"That we mustn't be surprised to find her greatly changed, and hardly the same person she used to be; that something about her—he does not say what—worries him greatly, and then, farther on, he speaks of the great gloom that has settled like a black cloud being lifted, and hopes that, once she is settled in her new home in the country, she may get back a portion of her old serenity."

"I don't see any thing so strange in that, Michael. It's only natural she should be greatly cast down for a while, but she'll get over it and be herself again, now he's gone."

"I don't know about that, Catharine. Under ordinary circumstances she might, but as the case stands, I am afraid she won't. She is proud-spirited, and mean though Spafford was, the very soul honor, and how it will gall her to live on those other children's property."

"I didn't think of that," Mrs. Bryan rejoined, "but I tell you, Michael, it's well for her and them too, that it was tied up so that Spafford couldn't get at it, or it would have gone with the rest."

"To be sure it would, but to think the step-mother's property left to her own children, and Kent having only the use of it during his life, is what

now supports hers and Spafford's, will be bitter as gall and wormwood to her."

"Yes, so it will ; but Clara is such a kind-hearted girl, and Leo is so whole-souled and generous, that she won't feel it as she would if they were different."

"May be so, but still it will be a great mortification to her. Clara is just like her own mother, warm-hearted and affectionate, and will be kind and forbearing ; and Leo will be the same he always has been, and so far as concerns her, they will get along well enough. The trouble will be with the children. If they are like Spafford they'll be in hot water directly, and a fine time they'll have of it."

"Have you ever seen them ?"

"No ! when I was there about the payments they were in school. But I tell you, Catharine, if they have his black, gloomy ways and diabolical temper, there's trouble ahead in Felix Kent's household, and poor Florence will be the foot-ball in it. Leo can't bear everything, and won't either ; and I wouldn't if I were in his place. That's the long and short of it." He raised his hand from the door case, and emphasized his words by letting it again fall heavily against it. His whole face was aglow ; there was a great struggle going on within him ; he had a profound respect for the dead. Away down in his deep, passionate nature, gener-

ally kept in excellent check by an iron will, governed and directed by earnest, fervent piety, was an awe and reverence for the poor, frail clod, once the habitation of an immortal spirit. The spirit, let it have been good or bad, was gone, the house empty and in ruins; but it was a house greater than a king's. Nay, it was more than a house; it was a temple. Fires, whether holy or unholy, had burned upon its altar, and priests had bowed before them. The temple was closed, the altar bare, the priest gone; but where? He could not tell, a mystery enwrapped the whole, and before this mystery, the great and awful mystery of death, his soul quailed. Not for the world would he have treated with disrespect the lifeless body of his bitterest foe; not for the world, heaped contumely on his memory, and now was one that had been no enemy to him, that had never done him an injury, that he had met and passed with utter indifference a thousand times; and he was gone, the cold grave hid him from mortal sight; and let his faults and failings be what they might, he should be gently and tenderly referred to. He could not do it. He must either be silent, or pour upon the memory of Homer Spafford a torrent of bitter and vindictive words. He did not wonder his wife, with the ready sharpness of her tongue, spoke as she did. He had begun by reproving her, when in answer to

one of her remarks, he reminded her he was gone, and now, as the record of his life rose before him, he felt there was danger of his ending in being a great deal harsher and sterner than it was her nature to be. He had been his whole life trying to correct his sledge-hammer style of coming down on anything that struck him as wrong, and to be somewhat more mild and Christian-like in the expression of his views and opinions. It always struck him as the height of folly to see a strong man showing his strength by flying into a passion, knocking the skin off his knuckles, and growing red and swollen in the face, trying to roar his opinion down the throat of a listener. It was a great deal more sensible, not to say Christian-like, to force his opinion silently down his own throat than to make himself so ridiculous about it. It was scarcely worth while having an opinion, if one could make no better use of it. He hardly thought Dick Garner the fool, with his stupid, vacant silence, made a more contemptible figure than Jesse Bush, vociferating like a madman, and gesticulating like a mountebank. He liked to see a man act as if he was his own master, not the slave of his passions, and he had labored hard to keep his under; and the good God's blessing resting on his endeavors, he had so far done it, and with the same help to the end he would do it. Standing in

the door, with the dancing shadows playing over his bronzed face and tall form, he thought this with the faith and humility of a little child. Homer Spafford was gone, and though surprised, he felt none of his usual tenderness at the thought of the dead stirring his heart ; on the contrary, he experienced a greater dislike than even in life, rise up against his memory ; he would command himself and be silent, if he could not speak as a Christian should.

“Catharine,” he said, as Mrs. Bryan came in from the kitchen, after seeing to the dinner, “Homer Spafford living did not have many friends, and dying there’s but few can regret him, but I will say no more about him. If he had been my bitterest enemy, I could not have felt bitterer to him, but it’s precious little concern to him how I feel, and let it be one way or the other, it could make no difference to him now.”

“True for you, Michael ; he’s gone to a just God, and we musn’t be making ourselves busy about what he was or what he wasn’t.” With her sharp eyes she read the meaning of the grave, solemn expression resting on her husband’s face, and responded to it with her whole soul. Death and its mysteries held the same awe over her it did over him. She could not comfort herself by a hurried, fervent *Poter* and *Ave* for his soul, but she con-

tented herself with offering up one for the faithful departed. Blessing herself at its close, Mr. Bryan, coming in and again seating himself at the table, said:

“But Kent, Catharine, wants to know if we could board the hands he’s going to send on to fix up the old place.”

“How many do you think there’ll be?”

“Probably a couple of carpenters first, then with them a couple of painters. He speaks of glaziers, but I think all the glaziers’ work there’ll be there to do can be done by the painters; but in their place he’ll want masons; two or three, may be. Kent don’t know how many or how few he really will want. I’ll have to keep an eye on, and see he don’t make himself useless expense. He knows no more about such things than a child. Poor man! an empty pocketbook, and no fund back of it, will be hard experience for him at his time of life.”

“But you think there will be six or seven of them?”

“Well, yes, Catharine; six and may be seven. Can we take them? for of course you know better than I whether we can lodge so great a number or not. Kent, I know, will want us to lodge them if we board them. He can’t be bothered finding

separate places for them to be eating and sleeping at."

"True, Michael ; but seven, that's more than I thought of. Let me see. She sat looking fixedly before her. "I'll tell you what we can do," she said, after a few moments' silence ; "we can put up three or four beds in the wood-house chamber. It's rather open, but for the summer I don't think that will be much. I'll clear it out and we can put them up to-morrow."

"So this afternoon I'll write to him to send them on?"

"Yes, Michael, and tell him we are glad to be able to accommodate him, and that we will do all in our power for him. Poor Kent, never will I forget how he stood by us in our trouble. Mrs. Bryan glanced at the clock on the long, narrow, old-fashioned mantel-piece, and again left the room to see to the dinner. "If I find the work too much for me, Michael will get a girl to help me," she said, communing with herself.

CHAPTER II.

FELIX KENT'S sixty-five years did not sit ungracefully upon him ; they added to his still erect and majestic form a venerable bearing. A quiet, thoughtful expression rested on his calm, benignant face ; a mild, benevolent spirit beamed from his clear grey eyes, which had lost none of the brightness of youth. His voice was deep and mellow, and he spoke slowly and distinctly with a certain decision as if he pondered well what he said and was sure of its correctness. He was never harsh in his judgments, was always inclined to the merciful side of a question, and had a kindness and gentleness about him that made him loved and revered by all that approached him—all that had hearts to appreciate genuine and unaffected worth. He was one to go to in trouble ; his ready sympathy comforted, and his friendly advice strengthened. His deep learning and earnest piety gave weight to his words, and cast a halo about them. He had the gentle dignity of one whose brain is clear and well poised, and whose conscience is serene and upright. He was compared to Fenelon ; adversity overtook him at a time when years demanded rest and lessening of cares, and the calmness and equanimity with which

he bore it made the resemblance all the more striking. In early life, before leaving his native land, he had married a truly pious and exemplary girl, but she died a year after coming to America, leaving a little daughter to solace him in his bereavement. Devotedly attached to the memory of his wife, he did not marry again till his daughter was grown up, and on the eve of marriage herself ; then he took a second wife. Like his first, she was an excellent woman, and proved a sincere friend to his child. Had her admonitions been followed a world of trouble might have been saved poor Flora Kent. She did not like Homer Spafford, and as delicately as possible pointed out the danger of an alliance with him. / But Florence was blind, may be a little obstinate, and could not, would not see any defect in him. He professed no antipathy to their religion ; on the contrary, boasted of his great liberality and the veneration he always entertained for the truly pious, let their profession be what it might, and was so smooth and insinuating in his manners, so profoundly respectful to her father, and so deferential to herself, that Florence, young and inexperienced, was wholly deceived. She thought him worthy and noble, and loved him with all the warmth of her trusting heart. Her father could not bear to cross her affections, and, fearing the worst, and hoping the

best, gave his consent. It was not long before the mask fell, and he stood before her in his real character, a dark, sullen and remorseless tyrant. Hiding her misery under a studiously calm exterior, she tried faithfully to do her duty. Her husband was very exacting, and as might be expected, the one following the other, extremely hard to please. His remonstrances were not loud and boisterous, but deep and low-mouthed. She endeavored with patience to bear up under him, and superintending his household, keeping everything in the most perfect order, devoting every moment that was not spent in prayer to his comfort, she hoped to win from him a kind word or approving smile. Vain hope! She got neither. He seemed to think a wife was not intended as a companion and help-mate; in his eyes she was only a household drudge, a machine to wind up with black, sullen looks and surly remarks, and to keep running from year's end to year's end, without cessation. More than once, in the smothered tones of high passion, he had growled out between his teeth the portent remark, "What did I marry you for but to wait on me?" And she waited on him, and worked for him, and the years passed, and the sunshine died out from her heart; knowing nothing of the happiness of home and companionship, never tasting the enjoyments of society, solitary and alone, without sympathy and

without kindness, she would have sunk into the grave, leaving the four children God gave her, motherless but for the sustaining power of religion. She sought and found in it a balm for her afflicted heart. As the minds of her children opened, like a fond mother she strove to instill in them a love and veneration for the glorious Faith that under her trials made life endurable. Taken up with business and the pleasures of society, which he freely allowed himself while sternly denying them to her, he hardly minded it at first. Besides, about this time he professed a contemptuous indifference to all religious sects, and, a born tyrant himself, sneered in his dark, sullen way at what he was pleased to term "that monstrous tyranny popularly known as religion." He read Cousin, Descartes, Carlyle, Lock, Emerson, Theodore Parker, and other philosophical writers. He delighted in certain French authors, and gloated over the socialistic tendencies of their writings; and yet in the midst of all his contempt for religion, and his unholy desire to have the bonds of society rent asunder, seeing the quietness and order with which his wife was bringing their children to church, and the comfort she drew from her Faith, like a hawk upon a dove he pounced down upon her, tore them from her fostering care, placed the two eldest in one of the godless schools of the day, at a dis-

tance from home, and sternly forbade her going to church or approaching the sacraments. Mrs Spafford, patient and long suffering, was fully roused. A force and energy of character one would not have dreamt of in her, at once shone forth. With a cry of rage she demanded back her children; she wrote to the head teacher and ordered him to send them home.

Spafford wrote and countermanded the order. She went for them herself, and would, in open defiance to his wishes, have brought them back but she found them the occupants of sick beds. Their grief at parting with their mother was intensified by her anguish at the thought of the place they were being taken to. Besides this, they were made to attend the church or meeting-house near the school, and the harrowing fear that by their compulsory presence they were consenting to heresy and forsaking the glorious Faith of their mother, so wrought upon them that their health failed, a fever set in, and raving and unconscious, the poor, heart-broken mother found them. Spafford was immediately telegraphed for; he came, and three days after their remains were taken home. In the Catholic cemetery, in consecrated ground—for Spafford was ashamed before his friends to refuse her this sorrowful satisfaction—their little bodies were laid. After this, she was left undisturbed to

pursue her own way, not because her husband's heart was touched, or that any remorse troubled his soul ; it was simply that he might escape the censuring remarks of the world around him. From certain words he had chanced to hear, and from open and undisguised glances of aversion that were cast upon him, he felt he was becoming disagreeably conspicuous ; and desirous of appearing fair and unblemished and free from prejudice, he affected an utter indifference in the matter. No longer shackled in the sacred discharge of her duty to her children, Mrs. Spafford sunk back into her usual, gentle, and uncomplaining ways, and although Spafford, smiling more blandly than ever in society, became a still greater tyrant, if possible, at home, she never let fall from her lips a murmuring or reproachful word. Her forbearance did not soften him ; harder, sterner and more exacting he grew, and a sorry life she led. Gradually a cause shone forth for his increased sullenness and ill nature. His business became involved ; and monetary matters assumed a threatening look. Ruin stared him in the face. In pity to his wife and children, Felix Kent came to the rescue ; and for a while he seemed again prosperous ; but appearances were deceptive ; again his father-in-law had to help him. He indorsed for him to a heavy amount. Soon after, he went west ; Mrs. Spafford and her child-

ren were left in R., but they soon followed him, and shortly came news of his death, and following quickly in its wake, news of his utter insolvency. As his affairs were looked into, it was seen Felix Kent was involved in his ruin. Strange whispers got out ; people shook their heads and let fall mysterious words. Forgery, and a something beside forgery, one could not make out what, floated on the air. Felix Kent was looked upon with pity, and pointed to as a victim, and Homer Spafford's name was mentioned with deep and angry imprecations heaped upon it. Many were sufferers, but not to the same extent as Mr. Kent. Of all his wealth, his Tasso farm alone was left him, and this because it had been willed to his second wife and her children. Extreme dislike to Spafford, and a fear that Felix Kent, with his good nature and easy, unsuspecting disposition, would yet be beguiled into some ruinous speculation by him, had caused Leo Grattan to make this provision for his daughter and her two children. He knew Felix Kent, as husband and father, would have the use of it during his life, and that was all he could want of it. At his death his daughter and her children must have it ; not that Spafford, with his black-hearted meanness. It was well, this care and forethought of the old gentleman. His daughter, Kent's wife, was now for several years

dead, but it secured a home for her children and their father—a home which, with their generous natures, they were willing to share with poor homeless Florence and her children. Mr. Kent had rented the farm till within a year or two back, and since then, acting on the advice of Mr. Bryan, he had let it on shares. The income from it he had carefully and conscientiously put out to interest for the children, and from this he was now able to draw the means to make the necessary improvements and repairs, and get farming implements and all that would be required for their new way of living.

It was a fine, cloudless day in the latter part of summer, that Mr. Bryan rode to Livy, five miles from Tasso, to meet Mr. Kent at the cars. He was coming to Tasso to see how the carpenters were progressing with the old house. Mr. Bryan stood at the station waiting, and eagerly scanning the travellers as they alighted. At last, when nearly all had left the cars, the tall, majestic form of Felix Kent was seen on the platform ; slowly descending the steps he looked about him, and Mr. Bryan, hastily advancing forward, extended his hand. It was caught in a warm grasp.

“I am glad to see you, Mr. Kent, looking so well and hearty,” he said, hardly knowing what to say, for this was their first meeting since the failure. He did not want, with a hundred eyes upon him,

and ears wide open all around him, to speak of his misfortune ; he wanted to say something cheery and wholesome, that would have nothing gloomy or lugubrious about it.

"Yes, well and hearty," he repeated, and then to finish off his sentence gayly and handsomely, he added, "and ten years younger than when I last saw you."

"Yes, thank God, I am well, and for one of my years strong and active," Mr. Kent candidly and openly returned. And then after a sharp, scrutinizing glance, in his grave and kind way, he continued, "and you too, thank God, are well. A farmer's life agrees with you, Michael ; I thought it would."

Mr. Bryan turned aside his head to hide the tremor of his firm lip, and the moisture that in spite of him gathered in his eyes.

"I will take your satchel and lead the way to the buggy," he said, quickly regaining his composure.

"My horses are not used to the cars," he remarked, by way of saying something, "and the snorting and puffing of the engine and the confounded scream of the whistle would scare them out of their wits, so I left them a little back. Come with me." He strode along, bowing now and then to an acquaintance, retaining a careless

demeanor, and talking on general topics till they were seated in the buggy and the horses' heads turned homeward. Then he laid his hand on Kent's knee, and feelingly remarked :

"It was a hard blow for you, Mr. Kent, at your time of life."

"Yes, Michael," he slowly and meditatively answered, "but mercy tempered its force. My children have been spared to me, and I have a shelter I can turn to. Think you if Job had been so favored he would have sunk bitter and desponding under it. When they came and told him *all* was swept from him, and his children were gone too, did he murmur or rebel? No, he rose up and rent his garments, and having shaven his head, fell down upon the ground and worshipped. And in all his sore affliction, the sacred penman assures us 'he sinned not by his lips, nor spoke any foolish thing against God.'" The gentle dignity that had always characterized him through life had not in his adversity forsaken him, and Mr. Bryan listened with reverence and respect; and yet in his reverence and respect was a certain impatience. He wanted to comfort, to say something cheering and strengthening. He had left home that morning full of grand hopeful words, and now to find they were not needed, that his little set speeches of condolence were to be hustled silently to one

side, was not perhaps altogether pleasing. But underlying this feeling was another, sharper and more stinging. He deeply realized the injury that had been inflicted on the great, good and noble man beside him, and to think, in the exalted serenity of his mind, he did not, and was, after his own fashion, as insensible as a child to it, irritated and annoyed him. A little bitterness he felt would have been wholesome, a little anger to the memory of Homer Spafford only salutary. There was neither. He was just as calm and equable, just as mild and benignant as when everything was fair and prosperous around him. It was not natural, not a bit natural, and Michael Bryan told himself so several times before he ventured an answer, and then with some asperity he said :

“If you don’t feel it, Mr. Kent, the children will. They can’t help it.”

In a moment he was sorry for his words. A change passed over Mr. Kent’s face ; he sighed heavily, and looking vacantly over the fields, answered as if speaking to himself :

“Yes, they will feel it, and it will be hard for them ; it will be such a blight upon all their hopes and prospects in life.”

“But—” there was now a chance for some of Bryan’s comforting words—“may be they’ll find it one of those blessings in disguise. You know

many a one tried in adversity rises strong and resolute out of it, and displays a force and energy of character which in ignoble ease would never have been dreamed of as belonging to them."

"Yes, I know," was absently returned. The eyes were still on the far-off hills, the face still wore its saddened, grieved expression. Bitterly Bryan regretted his thoughtless words. 'The past, so galling to him, came up, the darkness that had gathered around him, the degradation that was dragging him down from his manhood and making him a despised and hated object, the wretchedness of his wife and children, the poverty and desolation of his home, the grave, the terrible grave of the inebriate, that was opening to receive him and close up the page of horror for him in this world, and the thousand times more terrible horrors awaiting him in the other. He closed his eyes and firmly compressed his lips to keep down the rising groan; his whole frame shook, and large drops stood on his brow, and coursed down his haggard cheek. And he who had drawn him from all that misery, and taught him self-respect and usefulness, and with firm, gentle patience led him back to the path of rectitude, who strengthened him by his wise counsels, and who put himself between him and temptation, who sent him to Tasso and placed him on that farm and let him pay up for it by de-

grees, and made so much of him and his family, and was such a good ministrant angel to him and his—he was there beside him, crushed and stricken, and he, in the hair-brained thoughtlessness of his nature, had torn open fresh wounds, and now had the miserable satisfaction of seeing them bleed before his eyes.

“Felix Kent,” he exclaimed, in a husky, trembling voice, “your children will find a great change in their home; but it will not, mark my words, be a change hurtful to them. As you were good and merciful to others, so God will be good and merciful to you and them; and from this change will come their greatest blessing.” He grasped his hand and warmly pressed it.

Mr. Kent, brought back to the things around him, and tears standing in his deep, earnest eyes:

“I believe you, Michael,” he mildly returned. “It will, indeed, be a great change to them; but the good God’s mercy will be over them, and bear them up under it.”

“And Leo and Clara, Mr. Kent, will grow up nobler and stronger than if they had been left to be petted and spoiled by fashionable society.”

“That is true, Michael. It was not of them I was thinking, but of poor Florence.”

“She takes it bitterly?”

"Yes; she is wonderfully changed. You will hardly know her."

"Is she wild like."

"No. Sunk into apathy, she moves about the house silent, like one asleep; seldom speaks unless spoken to, and then the lips open, and the words come out just as if she did not know it. Clara and Leo try to rouse her, and wake up some interest in her, but she only looks at them vacantly, and, pushing them aside, seats herself, and with some sewing in her hands, keeps busy without seemingly knowing what she is doing, or what she is about."

"Do you think her brain is touched?"

"No, for when I tell her of my arrangements for the future, and how I intend to do when we get settled in our new home, she shows more clearness and better judgment than I. In more than one instance she has pointed out mistakes and errors, and told me how to remedy them."

"Does she wake up like when she is doing it?"

"No, her eye has the same cold lock, and her voice the same lifeless monotone. It is just as if a corpse opened its lips and spoke, and I listen with a chill, aching feeling in my heart."

"Is she thin and shadowy?"

"Yes, very; and has a pale, sunken face."

"Strange that she should so mourn for Spafford," Bryan could not help saying, "I should

have thought—" but he paused, and Mr. Kent, as if he had not heard the remark, or hearing it did not understand its import, rejoined :

" Florence's little boys are good, intelligent children. They show the use of a kind, gentle mother ; for Florence has been kind and gentle to them."

" But, Spafford, does she often refer to him ?"

" No, she never so much as mentions his name. When others do, her countenance looks wild and her features work convulsively."

" How, in God's name, can she so mourn for him ? him that was always such a black tyrant over her, and never let her know what peace or comfort was from the day she married him." To save his life Bryan could not have kept this question back. Discreet to all others concerning the affair, he could not restrain himself to her father.

" Michael," Mr. Kent thoughtfully returned, " I may speak freely to you ?"

" Certainly you can ; you need not fear I will be blabbing to others."

" Well, then, Michael, I will tell you ; it does not strike me so much like grief as a kind of consuming anger. I have watched her well, and there is a hardness about her that does not seem to belong to sorrow."

Mr. Bryan checked the horses to a slow walk, and looking Mr. Kent in the face, asked, " Did she

ever say anything to you about Spafford's last moments?"

"No, I know nothing about them."

"And as to her letter she just wrote you he was dead, and that was all?"

"So far as his last moments, that was all. When Spafford went west, you know his wife and children were left in their old home, and they did not go with him."

"No, Mr. Kent, I surely did not know that. When Spafford went west I thought he took his family with him."

"No, they did not go till afterwards. Florence came to me, Michael, and I—" he paused. He seemed to think he was saying too much. A veil fell from Mr. Bryan's eyes. He saw at a glance how the case stood. Deeply he felt for his friend and his much injured child. Too delicate to urge him to say more than his sensitive nature would permit on the subject, he only reflected how he could best get him over that point, so he could go on with the general account.

"And you advised her and the children to follow him?" he asked in as careless a tone as he could assume.

"I did, Michael, I advised it, and gave her the means to do it. I thought before God it was the best thing she could do. I wrote him a long letter

that she was to put into his hands the moment she saw him. I saw them safe off, and then I waited to hear from them." He raised his hat and wiped the perspiration from his brow. A look of agony was on his usually tranquil face. "Yes, I waited," he resumed, after a little pause, "waited an age, it seemed. It was only three weeks though, Michael, counted by the day; but to me it was months, years. At last a letter came. It was from Florence. I tore it open, and may I never live to receive such another. It was a wild, fearful cry of distress." His voice, which had been growing lower and lower for the last sentence or so, ceased. He sighed wearily, and again turned his eyes to the far off hills. Several moments passed silently. Mr. Bryan had never seen him so moved.

"Did you go for them, or did you send for them, Florence and the children?" he at length softly, gently asked.

"I went for them, Michael; I could not bear to send. I felt poor Florence would need the strengthening presence of her father. I knew she was in sore affliction; I expected to see her cast down and crushed like, but I was not prepared for the change I found in her. She gave me none of the particulars of his death; she merely told me, as she had in her letter, that he was gone; and she added, with a strange light in her eye, I am free,

free at last ; and then she laughed so wildly. I was afraid her brain was turned. But seeing my fear in my face, with a fierceness I never before saw in my poor child, she assured me she was perfectly sane, her mind sound, only her heart was bruised and torn. Of course the news of the failure had reached me before ; but in my apprehensions for her I hardly minded it. I knew I had the Tasso farm to turn to, and what could an old man like me care for it ? For years, Michael, are on me, and in a few more it will little matter, if my record is all right, whether riches or poverty was my lot here."

A murmured "True for you," came from Mr. Bryan's lips, while he looked thoughtfully at the horses, and with the stalk of his whip adjusted the lines that had got some way entangled in the harness. Open and candid as Mr. Kent was, he could not help feeling there was something he kept back, something he could not bring forward. What it was he did not have time to consider, for Mr. Kent, after a short silence, remarked :

"The boys at once took to us, but with all our care we cannot rouse their poor mother."

"Have you called in a physician?"

"I have."

"What does he say?"

"I hardly know ; he was very oracular in his re-

marks, said something about time effecting a cure and left a prescription which I had made up by the druggist. But she would not take it, alleging that she was not sick and did not need it. Really, Michael, I don't know what to make of it."

"Remember, Mr. Kent, that she has severely suffered. His death and failure, and the involving you in his ruin, would naturally have a depressing effect upon her. But she'll soon rally when once you are settled out here. The quiet life you will lead, going to church and approaching the Sacraments, will bring her back to herself again."

Mr. Kent groaned aloud. He bent his stately head and firmly compressed his lips, while an ashen hue settled on his face. Mr. Bryan looked uneasily at him.

"Felix Kent," he exclaimed, "you don't doubt the blessed and consoling power of the Sacraments?"

"No, Michael, I do not. God forbid that I should; but since coming home she has never entered the church. Father Shiels has called several times, but she has invariably refused to see him."

"Good God! Mr. Kent, what does it mean? She didn't use to be so. As great an infidel as Spafford was, she was always so pious, a kind of second St. Monica, I used to think."

"Yes, so she seemed to me, but alas! that is all

changed now. As I told you before, she is greatly changed."

A terrible suspicion floated through Mr. Bryan's mind. His eye looked wild, and his swarthy cheek paled. He could not speak of it ; could not in the most remote manner refer to it, so they rode silently on till the horses stopped before his gate. Giving the lines to one of the workmen that came to take charge of the team, he led the way up to that front door that was so seldom entered.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. BRYAN, plainly and neatly dressed in brown merino, with a bit of white about the neck, was there to meet them. Her clear blue eye filled as she eagerly extended both hands to Mr. Kent, and excitedly exclaimed, "God bless you and yours ; a thousand welcomes. A thousand." She turned away unable to say more.

She had been trying all the morning to compose herself so as to meet their guest in an easy, kind and cordial manner. She had not, like her husband, been thinking of little set speeches of condolence ; she very wisely concluded they would not be needed, that Michael would say all that would be necessary on that head, and she would

only upset her calmness if she attempted them. She would just refer to it in a kind of general way, and let it go at that. But when she saw him, and thought of the great blight that had come upon him in his old age, and of his goodness to her and hers in the past, her heart fluttered, her cheek flushed and paled, and her eyes filled. Her voice trembled as she uttered her first hospitable words, and she stopped, feeling it would be hopeless to keep the sobs back if she continued speaking. He took her hands in his, and looking down on her, calm and benignant as ever, for he had regained his composure, smilingly rejoined :

“I am coming soon, Mrs. Bryan, to be your neighbor. Take care how you welcome me. Your warmth and generosity may make me and mine too frequent and troublesome visitors.”

“No, no, Mr. Kent,” she hurriedly exclaimed, “you and yours can never wear your welcome out with us, never.” The mere thought made her angry ; and this restored a certain calmness, a crispy, nipping coldness. Drawing her lips down to an extreme thinness—and a capability to do this few possessed in so striking a degree—her whole face, her eyes, her nose, her chin, seemed to grow sharper, and her words at such times had a peculiarly incisive ring, she said :

“We had always flattered ourselves, Mr. Kent,

Michael and I, that you had a better opinion of us than to fancy we could ever forget what we owed you."

Mr. Kent looked surprised, but before he could frame an answer, Mr. Bryan hastily remarked :

"Of course, Catharine, Mr. Kent knows we don't and can't forget, and now tell me is dinner ready?" Mr. Bryan understood extremely well how to manage. The current of her thoughts at once took a milder turn, her face lost its rigid lines, her voice its caustic tone. As her house-wife duties rose before her, her good humor was wholly restored. She had two dinners that day to get; the one for the workmen, and the one for the family and guest. As a general thing the workmen and family dined together, no distinction being made; but to-day it was different. Mr. Kent was coming, Michael had gone for him, and she must get up a meal that would do honor to him and reflect credit on herself. She got it, and in getting it her generous nature would not allow her to get quite the common fare for the workmen, consequently several very palatable extras were added to theirs. They had already partaken of it; Kittie and Anna, her daughters, were home from school, and were now, the one clearing away the first table and resetting it, the other giving a few finishing touches to the gravies and sauces

"It will be ready in a moment, Michael," Mrs. Bryan suavely answered. Just step into the parlor and in a minute I'll call you."

"The men?"

"Oh they've had theirs and are gone; they couldn't be kept waiting, you know." She threw open the parlor door as she spoke.

It was a pleasant room, that old parlor, with its low ceiling and small, many paned windows. A carpet, that looked like a meadow thickly sprinkled with delicate white clover blossoms, covered the floor; the ceiling was spotlessly white, glossy, marbled-grained paper covered the walls; the doors and wainscoting, carved in the strange, fantastic style of rich farm-house parlors of forty years ago, now in their polished state of pearly whiteness, did not strike disagreeably on the eye. They had a certain, precise, somewhat formal, but withal very correct appearance. They had once been considered the height of respectability, and now a little modernized by paint and varnish, they retained something of their old grand look; hair-covered chairs and sofa were arranged with methodical carelessness round the walls, an oval mahogany table with a few richly bound volumes and a vase of fall flowers on it, occupied the centre of the room; stiff, green paper curtains, and over them embroidered muslin, shaded the windows. Over

the long, narrow mantel-piece, in a plain gilt frame, was a *Mater Dolorosa* worked on canvas. Shaded with taste and judgment, it had the appearance of a rich oil painting; three or four engravings, all of a religious character, the Last Supper, Christ blessing the children, the Blessed Virgin's visit to her cousin St. Elizabeth, and St. Paul preaching to the Athenians, hung on the walls. At the far corner of the room, near the door leading into the sitting and dining room—for this latter was both—was another picture. It was one that usually hung in Mr. and Mrs. Bryan's room; but it had been removed to its present place a few days before, to do honor to their coming guest. It was not richer or of more artistic merit than the others; in fact it was a very simple affair, only a pledge to abstain from all intoxicating drinks, drawn up in the usual form, and written in a firm, steady hand. The hand that signed it was tremulous enough, shaky, uncertain, with a seeming faint-heartedness about it. But no faint-heartedness was in the will that guided it; it was only the weak, nerveless fingers feeling the want of accustomed stimulants that trembled; but the soul was strong and hopeful, leaning on the Divine promise: "Ask and you shall receive; Seek and you shall find; Knock and it shall be opened unto you." The strength to resist temptation, the power to commence a new

career, the grace to lead a new life had Michael Bryan prayed for, and his prayer had been heard and answered. The paper on which the pledge had been written had been neatly fastened on a large sheet of Bristol board, and on the wide margin thus formed, a handsome wreath of shamrocks had been painted. The whole was framed in black walnut, relieved by a band of gilt.

Walking directly up to this picture Mr. Bryan pointing to it asked :

“Do you know that writing?”

“Why, yes, Michael, it’s yours and mine,” he simply and openly replied ; “and you have nobly kept it.”

“It was a blessed day for me that you found me, Mr. Kent, sitting like a condemned criminal on the grave of our little Mary. I felt then all my misery and degradation, and the wretched husband and father I have been, after all the bright hopes and purposes I had on my wedding-day. Degraded as I was, I keenly felt it ; but as keenly as I felt it, I needed a helping hand to lift me out of my misery ; I was weak and powerless as a baby, and yours was the one stretched forth to save me. God was good and merciful to send you to me. When I first came here, what with the heavy labor, the want of companionship, the dragging Sundays, without priest or Mass, for that was before Father

Doyle came or the church was built, I used to feel lonely and down-hearted enough."

"But you never wanted to go back to the old life, Michael?"

"No, no, God forbid; but—I've no need to hide it from you now; the new life was hard at first."

"I don't doubt you," was kindly and benignantly answered, "I don't doubt you. Turning from your old ways, breaking right off from them, and not tampering with them, and allowing them in the end to get the mastery of you, was like tearing the life from you. I used to fear so much you might waver."

"And that was why you used to come out to see me in those years?"

They both had turned from the picture and were now seated by one of the windows, and looking him mildly in the face, Mr. Kent frankly answered:

"Yes, Michael, it was; I had the farm here in Tasso to see to, and I would make that the excuse, you know."

Mr. Bryan laid his hand on his knee. "Never," he excitedly exclaimed, "never, as long as you live say that you or yours can wear your welcome out in my home. Why, man alive, would I now have a home to welcome you to if it had not been, under God, for you. Do you suppose I can forget it? do you think me a senseless brute?" He had to

express himself strongly ; his feelings must have some kind of vent. He was proud of his home, of that weather-beaten old house with its outside rustiness and its inside full and plenty, of the well filled barns and the broad acres. It was so different to the miserable old life he had lived ; so different from the hand-to mouth experience that had been his before the real blackness came.

Mr. Kent smiled. "It seems, Michael," he calmly said, "that unfortunate remark of mine stings you and Mrs. Bryan terribly. I did not mean anything offensive at all. You know I have no doubt of your and her kind feelings to me and mine." He would have referred to the little he had done for them—for in the generosity of his great, noble heart it seemed little, a mere nothing—but he saw in their overflowing gratitude it would not be borne. Had not adversity overtaken him, they would probably not have felt it so keenly ; but with their gratitude was mingled a deep, overpowering pity and commiseration for his troubles, and this was the way it shone out. A diversion came. The door leading into the dining-room opened, and Mr. Bryan's two daughters came in. Kittie was nineteen, Anna seventeen. Two years younger, she looked half a dozen years older. She was tall and slender, in form and feature resembled her father, but her eyes, in shape and color like his,

were clearer and softer, and in expression gentler, and while he was confident in his bearing, she was timid and shrinking. Kittie, the other one, was altogether a different person; a charming blonde, with large deep blue eyes; a forehead as white as Parian marble, shaded with golden red hair—that hue so admired by the old painters—finely-penciled eyebrows, a straight nose, a laughing mouth, a dimpled chin, a rose-tinted cheek, a plump little form, and Kittie Bryan stands before you a joyous, kind-hearted girl, intelligent, well-informed and polished, by several years at the Sister's schools.

She walked directly up to Mr. Kent, and extending her hand, gayly said:

"This is Mr. Kent, our new neighbor, and father's and mother's great friend!"

"And this," replied Mr. Kent, smiling and taking her hand, "is Kittie."

"How did you know I was Kittie?" she laughingly asked.

"Because I remember Kittie it was that had the light hair and eyes. The other was pale, with dark hair and large, thoughtful eyes, dark too. I never got so well acquainted with her as with you. She always played shy when I was here."

"Yes sir, and she mostly plays the same now when any one is here. Annie, why don't you shake hands? Don't you see Mr. Kent is reach-

ing his hand to you. Remember you are no longer a child. You cannot run to the wall and with your back to the company, peep round to see if any one is looking at you."

"Neither do I want to," she replied, timidly extending her hand. "I am glad to see you, Mr. Kent," she added, with gentle dignity, "and rejoice in the prospect that we are soon to have you and your family as neighbors."

"I do not doubt you, my dear child," he answered, bending his kind, fatherly eyes upon her. "You and your sister will be great friends with my Clara. She is just your height and is pale like you, but more in disposition, I should judge, like Kittie. She is naturally buoyant and hopeful, I mean to say," he remarked, in an explanatory tone, turning to Mr. Bryan.

"I am glad to hear it," he heartily responded: "a cheerful, lightsome turn of mind is one of the greatest blessings in the world. It makes home so bright and happy, and gives such strength to carry the heavy burdens of life."

"Mr. Kent and father, dinner is ready," Kittie said.

"Your mother sent you in to let us know."

"Yes, father, partly for that and partly to introduce ourselves."

"I think," she said, turning to Mr. Kent as he

rose and prepared to follow her, "that an introduction over one's meal disagreeably interferes with the pleasures of eating."

"My little friend is something of an epicure," he smilingly rejoined, thinking how her light, easy and graceful ways would please Clara, and what a charming companion she would be to her when once they got settled there. Strangers always took more to Kittie than to Annie. Annie was so distant, cold and reserved.

"I don't know about being an epicure, Mr. Kent," she replied; "but this much I do know I enjoy helping to get up a good meal, and then, almost as much as old Gulo seton himself, I enjoy helping to eat it."

She gracefully moved on and took a seat at the well filled and tastefully arranged table. Annie was seated beside her, Mr. Kent opposite them, and her father and mother at the head and foot. After grace, notwithstanding her father's and mother's presence, she did the carving and made the tea. With an easy, good-natured bearing, she did all the honors of the table. Her father and mother were so engaged in laying out the future management of the Tasso farm to Mr. Kent, and striving to impress upon him the great necessity of converting some of the ploughed fields into pasture and meadow lands, that they had not a thought for

anything else. Not a word was said of his failure, nor was Spafford's name mentioned. Mr. Kent's coming there to live was nothing more than any other man coming. It was glorious to be a farmer, he enjoyed such privileges, was so free and independent, and had such power entrusted to him, the feeding of the world. Without him trade would languish, the professions fade, and science disappear from the face of the earth. Mr. Kent listened, assented to every thing, and when necessary put in a helping word. He knew well the generous motive that prompted their remarks, they wanted to cheer and comfort him in his trouble, and dignifying his future way of gaining a livelihood was their way of doing it. But as blessing themselves they rose from the table, he smilingly observed :

"It is somewhat strange to me, Michael, that appreciating as you do the favored life of a farmer, you should prefer another for your sons."

"Another for my sons ! how do you know that I do." A color had mounted Mr. Bryan's sun-browned cheeks.

"I conclude you intend them for some of the professions, from the fact of your working so hard to give them the benefits of a collegiate course. After graduating, I suppose they will choose that which seems best to them, or that which they feel

they have a calling or vocation for; it all means about the same."

Mr. Bryan hastily replied; "Why, yes, if they want to enter any of the professions they can do it; if they don't, they can come back to the farm; their learning will make ~~none~~ the worse farmers of them."

"Certainly not. Cincinnatus, returning to the plough, did not detract from his worth, or make him less esteemed by succeeding ages."

"No, indeed," exclaimed Annie, joining for the first time in the conversation, "nor from the honor that had been shown him. Never did Rome show greater wisdom than when she proved her capability of admiring such men as Cincinnatus, and placing trust and confidence in them. Cincinnatus, guiding and saving the people that trusted in him, was great; but Cincinnatus, his object attained, the peace of his country secured, leaving the grandeur of wealth and station, and coming back with an honest heart, and unsoiled hands to his plough, was greater still."

"Yes, my child," Mr. Kent thoughtfully responded, "greater still; for, ordinarily speaking, it required a greater amount of fortitude to leave the higher for what is generally considered the lower calling."

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"The higher for the lower," contemptuously repeated Mr. Bryan.

Unheeding the interruption, Mr. Kent mildly asked, "Have your brothers ever worked on a farm? Do they know anything practically of agriculture." The question was put to Kittie. Annie had retreated into the background, and her face, for a moment lighted up, was again cold and reserved.

"Yes sir," answered Kittie; "they do. Father took good care they should do their part till they left home, and now every vacation they help a great deal in the harvesting. They go right at it with hearty good will, and are anxious to have as much done as possible before they leave again. Oh you should see how brown and stout they get."

"And what fine appetites they have."

"As to their appetites, they by no means lose them; but if you should see the way they attack the table and rummage the buttery, cellar, dairy, and preserve closet, when they get home, and the havoc they make in the orchard, you would not think their appetite needed much improving. You call me an epicure because I love to get up a good meal, and enjoy it when got up; I don't know what you would call them."

"I do."

"What?"

“Fine healthy boys, blest with a good, sound constitution, and showing it in their general activity and never failing appetites. I remember them well, sturdy little fellows, George and Henry by name. They used to run to the gate to meet me, and managed to keep round me all the time of my visit. Ah, I have not forgotten them and their wistful looks to serve me.”

“And they have not forgotten you and your kindness and patience in answering their tiresome questions. They often speak of it.”

“They were no worse in asking questions than my own children ; and that children should be inquisitive, does not strike me as singular at all. They are in a new world ; everything is strange around them, and they naturally want that strangeness removed. Hence their ceaseless questions, and the eagerness with which they fasten on one that will answer them. But come, Michael, I think we will now go up and see how they are getting along with the old place.”

Mr. Bryan got their hats, while Mrs. Bryan remarked :

“Oh, they are getting on finely, Mr. Kent, Michael and I were up there last evening. The plastering is all done and now they are at the painting ; the painters got here yesterday morning.”

“I hope,” said Kittie, following her father and

Mr. Kent to the door, "that you'll be here and settled by the end of another month; I am so anxious to see and get acquainted with your family. As to the curiosity of children," she laughingly added, "I don't know as one need wonder at it when they see the curiosity of their seniors. There is not one around here that is not teasing me every time they see me about the new neighbors."

"And what do you tell them?"

"I? I throw a great air of mystery around me, and in as wierd a manner as possible, bid them wait and see."

She had followed them to the gate, and gracefully bowing, she turned and walked back to the house. Her face was covered with smiles, for her heart was light and untroubled with haunting fears. Not so her father. He spoke of mysteries and the deep, shuddering horror that had filled his soul when he heard the strange reluctance Florence showed to seeing the priest, and her non-approaching of the Sacraments, again came over him. "Yes," he mentally said, "there is a mystery, a deep, unfathomed mystery about them. Little does she know how much truth there is in her careless, thoughtless words."

As to Mr. Kent, he bowed his head, and walked on in silence beside his friend. There was a deep feeling stirred in his heart. You could tell it by

the suppressed sighs, the drawn lips, the unutterable sorrow written on his calm, majestic countenance.

CHAPTER IV.

CLARA KENT was nine years old when her mother died ; Leo, her brother, was four years older. Leo gave promise of making just such a man as his father. He was grave and thoughtful beyond his years, and of a remarkably kind and gentle disposition. He was not a still, solitary child ; on the contrary, he loved to be with his companions, and in their pastimes was among the most active. But he did not go about his play in a gay, careless or heedless manner ; there was an earnestness, decorum and unsmiling intensity thrown over it, that made it appear more like work than amusement. As his father was an authority among men, so he was a leader among boys. Never coveting the first place, the first place was always willingly and gladly acceded to him. More inclined to use persuasion than force, he governed without hardly knowing that he did it ; and his companions yielding to his judgment, labored under the amiable delusion that they were only following their own. Such he was when his mother died, and his father

in his great anguish at his bereavement did not apprehend any trouble in managing him ; but with his sister Clara, it was different. She was a wild, impulsive child, devotedly attached to her mother and inconsolable at her loss. When her father tried to comfort her, she turned rudely from him ; when Leo essayed some soothing words, she only cried the louder, and when he took her little hand in his, she struggled fiercely to withdraw it, and succeeding, administered him a smart blow directly in his face. The father witnessing it, bowed his head and groaned. There was a terrible will and any amount of temper in that little one, and he was in trouble how he would be able to quiet the one and govern the other. In her overwhelming grief at her mother's death, she seemed to have forgotten all affection for him or her brother, and to look upon them with glaring eyes as if they were in some way to blame for her loss ; and hers and nobody else's she appeared emphatically to consider it. From the hour of her mother's death to the day of the funeral she wept continually, refusing to speak to any one, striking back the food that was offered her, and never once leaving the room where the still, shrouded form lay. But on the morning of the funeral there was a change. Her father had lifted her in his strong arms, that she might look down on the hushed face in the coffin. She gazed long

and wonderingly, and then with a wailing cry turned to him. Not a feature of his noble face stirred, but in his arms, she felt his heart beat quick and heavy, and his whole form tremble, and in his sad, searching eyes a something more than anguish. In his great strength there was a strange helplessness; in his calmness, a quiet that awed but did not reassure. She was frightened, and child that she was, felt the necessity of comforting and sustaining him in his sorrow. She could not tell how the feeling took possession of her; she only knew that if the pale leaden lips of her mother had opened and from them had come the command: "Comfort your poor father, solace him in his affliction; be a stay and a support to him," she could not have been more startled, and at the same time more impressed with the vital importance of obeying. Throwing her arms around his neck, she nestled her head on his shoulder and sobbed: "My father, my own father, I will be good to you, I will take care of you and do everything I can for you. See if I don't, O father, see if I don't." He bore her into another room, and tenderly seating her in a chair, bent over her and pressed one long lingering kiss upon her wet cheek. Not a word did he say, but kneeling, he blessed himself, clasped his hands and raised his eyes, those eyes so sad, so lonely. Springing from the chair, she knelt beside

him. Leo, coming in at the moment, bowed down, and together the stricken father and motherless children prayed. Rising from their knees, she wheeled up an arm-chair for her father and made him sit down; then, in a peremptory tone, ordered Leo to listen to what she had to say. He bowed his head in the stately way of his father; and then she informed him that as their mother was now gone, and their poor father had no one to talk to and comfort him, they must do it themselves. That they must be very good to him, take the best care of him, and see that he wanted for nothing. With a tear dimming his eye, Leo answered: "Of course, little sister, we will take care of him," and then the words seemed to stick in his throat, and he could say no more, but his frame shook with the sobs, and the tears came thick and fast from his eyes. Her father drew her to him and pressed her to his heart: "Yes, little one, take care of me. 'Tis God's love for my wild, impulsive child that has put this holy thought in her head; carried out it will do much towards making her a good, useful and happy woman."

His voice husky, his eye glazed in its dry agony, his face flushed like one fevered, his whole frame haggard and worn, impressed his words as with an iron pen upon her memory. In all her after life she never forgot them. From that day she set

about her mission in earnest, and child that she was, it was astonishing how well she succeeded. For in his desolation it was a comfort to see his little daughter anxiously waiting his return from his office ; getting his chair and stool, and slippers and newspaper, or book ; watching his features, and knowing by instinct what he wanted, and seeing that he had it, soundly rating the servants if they failed in any one point in their duty to him. It was amusing to see the way she fluttered around him, and how wise and important she looked when seating herself to hold a conversation with him. She chose those subjects she thought would be the most interesting to him, and history, biography and books of travel were learnedly discussed between them. She was never sent off to school ; she must be at home to take care of her father ; he could not spare her ; he needed her daily presence. He submitted to her ideas, for to tell the truth, they were not altogether fanciful. He did need her ; she was the joy and light of his heart ; without her he would indeed have been lone ; home would not have been home, if his bright-eyed, sunny-browed daughter had been away from it. Accordingly a teacher was employed in the house ; and caring for her father, and presiding over his home, her education went on. Her governess was a weak, timid little woman, and it was not long be-

fore she had her with the rest of the household under good subjection. At sixteen she thought she had reached the end of Mrs. Tole's capabilities, that she already knew as much, or more than her teacher. She could not bear to throw her unprovided on the world, and therefore gave her a year's salary, and dismissed her. Still unsatisfied she went further and got her another situation. Governess and pupil parted the best of friends. Henceforth left to her own direction, she began to explore her father's extensive library. Mrs. Tole had once, on witnessing her swaggering through the kitchen, and giving her orders like a brigadier general, remarked: "My dear, you have quite a masculine turn." Her ideas of what constitutes a masculine turn must have been peculiar, certain it is before the first year of her guardianship was over, she more than once, on witnessing similar displays of authority, reiterated the remark. Clara began to flatter herself it might be so. It pleased her to think it. If Mrs. Tole intended it as a gentle rebuke she signally failed. Her pupil would not, or could not see the point. At first it was considered as a sort of delicate compliment, afterwards looked upon as only the simple truth. Yes, she certainly possessed a masculine turn of mind, there was nothing foolish or romantic about her—her ideas of what constitutes a feminine turn were a match to

Mrs. Tole's on the other score—trash would not do for her, weak inanities were beneath her consideration, therefore in rummaging her father's library, she carefully eschewed the lighter part, and only partook herself to the heaviest ones. At seventeen, under a masculine cognomen, (her nom de plume when she published them, which she intended to do when she got sufficient to form a large, respectable octavo volume) she wrote learned articles—essays on The Rise and Fall of Nations; Meteors, Comets and Astronomical Phenomena; War and its Effects on Society; Arts, Science and General Literature. She patiently waded through debates in Congress, tried to feel an interest in them, flattered herself she did, and actually performed the marvellous feat of getting through the President's message and six columns length of political speeches, dry to the last degree. At eighteen she went into society, and was more admired than loved, and more annoyed and vexed than pleased or satisfied. At nineteen, her father failed, and a new experience of life spread out before her. When first informed of the change in their condition, she opened her clear, gray eyes wide, as if to take in the whole consequence at a glance, viewed it carefully, and then turning to her father, in a quick, energetic tone, remarked:

“By the unavoidable mishaps of business a

somewhat different role from what I intend to play is henceforth marked out for me." To his question as to what she meant she answered: "Nothing, father, only instead of being the Lady bountiful in my home and dispensing its charities, or more correctly speaking its hospitalities to my friends, with unsparing hand, I shall have to busy myself in retrenching every superfluity, dismissing the servants, playing cook and chambermaid myself, and astonishing everybody by the admirable way in which I can do it."

"But your poor sister and her children will have to be with us."

"Let them," she magnanimously returned, "it will only be two or three more mouths to cater for, and two or three more admiring witnesses to my general ability for anything I undertake."

"But poor Florence will be low spirited and sad, and will need some one to cheer and comfort her in her trouble."

"Exactly in my line, I will want nothing better. I can't bear sadness and gloom, and shall try my best to throw it overboard in her. To avoid monotony, and for the sake of a little variety it may be pleasing and romantic to be occasionally dreary and dismal, but to keep it up all the time is ridiculous. Florence must not think of it. I will not allow it."

As to the superfluities she would have to re-trench she at once set about them. She would not get herself any new fit-out ; her old one, with a little repairing, would do just as well ; neither would she think of leaving the hot and crowded city in the scorching months. It was no more for her to stay in it than for hundreds of others that were obliged to ; and she would cut down her visiting list to the smallest possible number—say five or six. That was as many as one of her studious habits could with any ease attend to. She was wanted to do this before, and now was the blessed opportunity for her to carry out her wishes, and she would have the whole house to herself, and not be under the espionage of servants. She would just be her own servant, and for once in her life, be waited on in a way that would not fret the very life out of her. And then her duties would not, after all, be so onerous ; she could order her bread from the baker's, and have hot joints and steaks, puddings, pies, etc., etc., sent to her from the restaurants. She did not, for her part, know why people need to make such an ado about a simple failure ; to her it only seemed a new and pleasing variety in life ; a kind of novelty that would drag one from *ennui*, and save them a troublesome journey to Europe. These were the ideas around which her mind com

fortably revolved for the first. Then came a shock, followed by another and another ; every thing was so different from what she thought it would be. She was rudely torn from the ideal and made to face the real. In the way of cutting down her visiting list, her friends saved her all trouble by cutting it down for her. She was indignant, wondered what it meant, and was beginning to frame some very effective remarks she would make when next she happened to meet them out, when she ascertained the interesting fact that for the future, her path would widely diverge from theirs, that she was to leave her city home and go to the country. Again she opened her large eyes, so earnest and thoughtful in expression, and took another view of her coming duties, and after her former experience, I am sorry to be obliged to add, as erroneous as before. Now there was no more thought of making her old out-fit, with a little dextrous management take the place of a new one ; there was no thought of an out-fit at all. What would she want of one ? She was going to be buried alive in a miserable little country home where there could be no possible comfort. It was well Florence and the children were coming ; their gloom would just be in accordance with every thing around them, in perfect keeping with the rest, all of one piece. There would be no baker to

send to, no restaurant to fall back upon ; her kitchen duties would be no make-believe, no pleasant pastime, but something terribly real. Indulging in a hearty cry, and finding it extremely wearying with her buoyant, hopeful temperament, to keep up a doleful melancholy for any continued length of time, she took another look through her horoscope. She would have to do all that—the cooking, baking and stewing—herself ; it was a mercy Florence was going to be with her ; she could help her a great deal, and if anything went wrong it would be an excellent provision to have her to lay it to, and not have to take the whole blame on herself. Poor Clara, one disappointment after another lay thickly strewn in her way. Florence and her children came, and she found she would be the last person to lay her blunders on, and that in her heavy lethargy of woe she could expect but little assistance from her. With a lively pity and commiseration for her sister's sorrows, was a kind of stormy consternation at her own wretchedness. She wrung her hands, pressed them over her heart, sadly shook her head, called herself the most miserable creature in existence, and, spasmodically rising from the chair into which she had despairingly sunk, she hurriedly pushed the dark hair from her broad, lofty forehead, and again looked ahead. There was, there must be, a little sunshine in store

for her ; she would not be left in total darkness ; all hope would not be shut out ; her only castle must still have a few embellishments, and she turned her attention to the home they were all soon going to. It was in the country, and a beautiful little cottage, with a vine-covered porch and a shady avenue leading to it, rose up before her imagination. She walked its rooms, which, considering its outward dimensions, were large and lofty ; she filled them with the rich furniture of her present home, and flowers, birds, musical brooks and fountains, green meadows and frowning forests, nestled around and stood guardian sentries about it. But a run out to the place, to dear, delightful old Tasso, with its glorious hills on all sides, and lo and behold another illusion faded. No shady avenue leading to a vine-covered porch, no little cottage opening its friendly door to receive her ; but a plain, white farm house, standing some little distance from the road, with barns and out-buildings, in too near proximity to suit one's ideas of elegance ; fences straggling and irregular, fields bristling with stubble, or sere with the breath of early autumn—was pointed out to her as her future home. She shuddered, and drawing herself straight, looked neither to the right nor to the left, till alighted from the carriage, her father drew her arm within his

own, and opening the little gate said, as they walked up the path leading to it.

"You are disappointed, my child, you do not like the place."

"I certainly do not feel very rapturous about it," she dryly returned.

"But it will be a home, a shelter for us."

"Of course," she impatiently answered. In spite of her desire to appear indifferent and self-contained, large tears rolled over her cheek. Snatching her arm from her father, she hastily wiped them away, and with pent breath, hard eye and compressed lips, went over the house, room after room, small and low, and still disagreeably fresh of the oil and varnish from the recent repairs. Then and there she determined to lay aside her general buoyancy of temper and be grave, and deep and stern; not like Florence, however, for her dull seriousness was not to her taste; it was puerile, weak, and lacking all dignity. Hers should be majestic, strong, and if necessary, highly tragical. She played the role till silently, loftily, and with a heart broken and soul crushed with indifference, she went over the house and grounds—toying with the tassel of her parasol, looking vacant, absent-minded and away off when a question was asked or a remark made, returning no answer or comment, walking with a stiff, unbending gate, and

sighing now and then vehemently. Once back in the carriage, she drew herself up in one corner, and let her eye rest gloomily on her father. Under all her overpowering anguish was a latent curiosity to know if she had made an impression. Yes, she had, there was not a doubt of it, her father had seen and noted all her wretchedness. His elbow rested on the back of the seat, his hand supported his head, his steel-grey hair, stirred by the breeze, floated over his face, partially shading his features—only *partially*, for she could plainly see the worn and haggard expression resting on them. Her heart was touched, she thought of all his patience and goodness to her in the past, and of his kind forbearance in her recent mortifying defeats in the kitchen. On her precipitately dismissing the servants, she had hunted up a cook-book, put on a large apron, rolled up her sleeves, and with an admirable sense of the importance of success, betaken herself to the kitchen and made her first attempt at getting up a good relishing meal. Failure followed fast on the heel of failure ; starvation stared the household in the face. She was desperate, and in her desperation threw the treacherous work, false guide as it had proved, into the fire. She did not know what next to do, and wrung her hands in perfect agony. Her father instead of upbraiding her, came to her assistance, and kindly

advised recalling the cook, at least for a time. As a drowning man catching at a straw, she clutched the idea; the cook was sent for, reinstated in her old place, and Clara once more became a pupil—pupil in the kitchen, and the cook her governess. Having a real desire to know, and fortunately not considering it beneath her dignity to learn, she made respectable progress, and by the time of her run out to Tasso, was able to get up a plain, palatable meal. Her father praised her and called her a treasure; his commendation warmed her heart like old wine. For with all her learned articles, and lofty opinion of her own capacities, she had never forgotten her duty to him. As of old in her childhood, he was to be seen to and taken care of. He needed it now more than ever, for years were coming upon him, his form had lost the fullness of middle age, his cheeks were fallen, his dark hair thickly sprinkled with white. She must be very attentive and see that he wanted for nothing. This thought had grown with her years and strengthened with her growth. Her voice, sharp and clear, and sometimes when all did not go to her liking, even shrill in its tones, always softened to the tenderest notes when addressing him. No wonder. Who had a kinder sympathy for her labors? Who so fully appreciated her abilities? Leo, that every one thought the very *fac simile* of his father, was

totally wanting in his profound respect for her talents. He cruelly closed his eyes and barred his heart against them. With a levity perfectly shocking in one of his usual gravity, he called her Jack Lizard, and compared her to the ambitious youth who boasted "he could pluck the dog-star from the sky and cram it in his budget." He declared that if astronomers should miss another star from the firmament, he would know where to look for it; he would point his telescope to her learned articles, and there, shedding a halo around them, he would be sure to find it. Her father had more sense; he could feel for her, and in his kind, pacific way could take her part. It was not in his nature harshly to rebuke anybody, therefore Leo escaped the severe reprimands he so richly deserved. His father had only said, in a slightly reproving tone, but with an air Clara thought of one deeply injured in his feelings for another: "Do not make light of her labor. If it amuses her and keeps her pleasantly occupied, let her study and write. She is a good child, and is very, very dear to me." And after that Leo was somewhat more respectful; that was, when at home from school, he was silent about her attainments, and annoyed her no more with his foolish remarks and miserable attempts at wit. What a dear, good sensible father she had, and now in the reverse that had come upon him.

should she be unmindful of his great worth? Should she cloud his majestic brow, and dim his mild, peaceful eyes by her selfish exactions? Should she spread a pall by her senseless gloom, over a home which, however humble, his presence dignified and made beautiful? Should she hasten the footprints of time, and make his last days miserable by her heartless repinings? She looked very energetic and determined while silently putting these telling questions. But all her life she had been in the habit of taking herself to task, and was thereby, under God, saved from becoming the victim of inflated conceit. In spite of her blue-stocking propensities, her heart governed her brain, and mighty as the latter was in her estimation, it never hindered her in her womanly duties. Instead of sitting the picture of despairing woe, with blighted hopes and crushed prospects written all over her face, she moved out of her solitary corner and approached her father.

"Father," she said, laying her hand on his arm, "you must not feel too bad if the place is not exactly to our taste. I dare say we will see many happy days in it."

"I! I!" he exclaimed, surprised, "I am not unhappy about that. I like the place well enough. Only I was afraid you did not."

"Well, to tell the truth," she frankly returned,

"it did not strike me as altogether the loveliest spot on earth ; but now I remember you will be there, and of course that quite changes my feelings about it ; so cheer up and don't look so dismal." She put on one of her sunniest smiles. He took her little gloved hand and held it caressingly in his, he looked into her clear open eyes, and gently remarked :

"Yes, the cloud is lifted, my child is herself again. Thank God for it. Oh, Clara, if you too were to get so forlorn and wretched as your poor sister, I should indeed be desolate."

"But Florence, father, will get over her lowliness of spirits out here."

"I hope in God she may. But if she should not, what then?"

"Why, if she don't father—if in spite of all I can do to cheer her up she remains just as she is,—I don't see any other way than to pray for her, and let it rest at that."

"God bless you, Clara ; I like to hear you speak in that way. I began to fear her inscrutable gloom might have a depressing effect upon you."

"Not at all, father. I shall be entirely too busy to indulge in the luxury of woe ; I shall have the house to look after and Theodore and Frank to see to, and make behave themselves ; and now and then when I can steal a moment's leisure. three or

four new articles that have been brewing in my mind to bring out." Her father, with all his gravity, had to smile. Observing the amused expression on his face, in a remonstrating tone she added. "But if without neglecting any of my other duties, I can do it, why should I not live here as well as in the city? You know the country is generally considered the better place of the two for study and reflection."

"Yes, my child, I know ; but what subject are you thinking of?"

"Oh, some of Euler's absurdities."

"Euler was a very learned man."

"Yes, but that did not hinder him from running into several very great absurdities ; and these, as soon as I get time, I intend to point out." She drew herself up with conscious power. "I don't like," she said, after several revolutions of the wheels in which she had gathered up her thoughts so as to give them clear and correct utterance, "his ways of speaking of the souls of animals and the souls of men. In explaining the properties of matter as distinct from those of spirit, he might have gone further and treated of the difference between instinct and reason--between the five senses : tasting, hearing, seeing, feeling and touching--acting on bodies endowed with soul, and those not endowed with soul. He might have had to add

another chapter to the work, but it would have well repaid the labor. Then again, his definition of the origin of evil is so far-fetched and out of the way, that I cannot read it with common patience—not one word of our first parents, and their disobedience and its consequence.”

“You think his philosophy overpowered his christianity?”

“I do, father, and, as might be expected, it did not exalt his genius or improve his style. How cold, stiff and unmeaning the explanation he gives.” Her cheeks, naturally pale, were tinged like the petals of a rose; her earnest, dark grey eyes shone clear and bright. She had a kind, attentive listener; the thoughts that had been gathering in her mind could be taken out and carefully looked over; no sneering comment, no blighting ridicule did she fear; all the way back to Livy, where they would take the cars home, she held to her subject. Unknown to her father, she had read and pondered the works of Euler. A friend had favored her with them; they belonged not to his library, but he now had the inexpressible satisfaction of seeing that the sound, excellent authors he had put into her hands, and which she had gladly and eagerly read, had really strengthened and elevated her mind; so she was able easily to de-

tect the chaff from the grain, and not be misled by high-sounding terms.

She had not called that day on the Bryans ; she thought it better to wait till she got settled in her new home. Then she would be glad to form their acquaintance. Now she had other things than visiting and being visited to attend to. Her father, with his usual good nature, humored her wishes

CHAPTER V.

SEVERAL weeks passed, and Mr. Kent and his family had bid adieu to their beautiful city home, and were settled in the country. It had been a busy time for them all. Leo had had several consultations with Mr. Bryan, and finding his practical knowledge of agriculture was worth all his father's theoretical law on the subject, he went to him in every doubt, and Mr. Bryan was only too happy to clear those doubts away. He took him in hand as if he had been his own son ; he told him how to manage, and more than this, he went to work and managed for him. After repairing the buildings, and getting the necessary outfit for the farm, he found they had considerable still left from their fund, and he advised them to draw from it to keep Mrs. Sjaafford's children in school, and Leo to go

on and finish his course. He would not be needed at home; his father could hire a man to take charge of the farm; that a man with a family would be the best, for he could hire a house near by, and his wife could then see to the dairy. He was wide awake in his care of them, hunted up the kind of a man he wanted, made all necessary arrangements with him, and had him there and settled almost as soon as Mr. Kent himself.

Mrs. Spafford, to the surprise of Clara, had proved of great service to her in the arranging and putting to order their new home. Quietly she went to work, and her experience and superior taste gave a certain air of elegance and refinement to the simply furnished rooms. White curtains, looped back with green cords and tassels, draped the chamber windows, while bright crimson shaded the parlor and dining room ones; plain ingrain carpets covered the floors, and hair-covered chairs and sofas took the place of the velvet and brocade of their old home. Here and there a rich picture hung from the wall, and little ornaments, dear from the memories clinging around them, but of small value in the money line, filled the mantel-pieces. A small room, back of the parlor, was converted into the library. On two sides, reaching from the floor to the ceiling, were shelves filled with books; an oblong table occupied the centre of the room, a

morocco-covered arm-chair was beside it, and a desk stood near the window, which, like the parlor and dining room windows, was shaded with a crimson curtain ; a small stove, polished to the last degree, was on the side opposite the table and over it ; on the mantel-piece was a bronze clock, a plainly framed *Mater Dolorosa*, and St. Liguori. This was called "the study," and was the place Mr. Kent purposed spending his time when not engaged on the farm. For he flattered himself, notwithstanding the excellent workman that had by Mr. Bryan's thoughtfulness been secured him, that his assistance and supervision would be absolutely necessary—a harmless mistake, which all were careful not to correct.

Had it no been for the fearful change that came over the patient and long-suffering Florence, under their reverse of fortune, the family would have been happy ; they had enough in an humble style comfortably to support them, and to their own energy, God's blessing resting on them, they would have looked hopefully forward to the bettering of their condition. Leo and Clara were young ; life all untasted before them ; no chilling disappointment had yet blighted the morning hopes of their existence ; Clara's learned articles would yet be published, and help her father, and do so much good. Leo, grave and thoughtful like his father, had, too, his

airy castle and beautiful hopes and holy aspirations clustered around it. He was a member of the graduating class in J—— Medical College. At the close of the present course of lectures he would have the degree of Doctor of Medicine conferred upon him, and his mind reached out to the future and expanded in the good he was to do. Through his ministration pain was to be relieved, and health and strength take the place of wasting disease. Many a conflict would he have with Death; and if at times the dark-plumed warrior conquered, again would he bear aloft the palm of victory. His days would be spent in doing good, and blessings would follow in his footsteps. To say he did not think of the wealth and distinction attending his skill, would not be true. He did think of it, but not meanly or selfishly. If they came, and to his young heart there was not a doubt of it, he would gratefully and humbly accept them—not to gain power and domineer, and lift his head in insolent pride over the less fortunate, but to extend his sphere of usefulness and do still more for his fellow-creatures. But all these bright hopes of the brother and sister were overshadowed by a dark, sombre cloud. Florence's strange and unaccountable avoidance of the sacraments pained and grieved them more than they were willing their father or any one else should know. They said nothing of it to each other at

first, they hardly owned it to themselves; they kept alleging one reason after another, but when one after another of these reasons faded away, they were left in doubt and fear and trouble. Leo showed his uneasiness of mind in being, if possible, kinder, gentler than ever to every member of the family. As to Clara she seemed to awaken to a somewhat clearer view of life. It was not all sunshine and revelry. The reading and writing of books was not the whole business of man. There was a great deal of homely every-day work to be done; there was a great deal to be borne with that was not exactly to one's taste. She knew this before, her pious books had told her all about it, and she had felt the carrying out of their maxims the easiest thing in the world; in fact, the only way a sensible person, with eyes and ears in his head, would or could do. But reading of them and reducing them to practice were two such different things. If Florence did not get back to be herself in the country, she was going to pray for her, and let it rest at that. That was all she could do for her, and doing it, she would be calm and hopeful as to the ultimate success of her plan. But now she found she could be neither calm or hopeful. She felt, what she called in her mind, a sort of holy anger against her. If she was a Christian, why didn't she act like one? Why didn't

she take her sorrows to God, and lay them before Him and, like David, meekly and humbly beseech His mercy and protection? Why did she abstain from the sacraments? and why was she such a cold, dead abstraction in the house? Didn't she know she grieved her father, and made the whole family wretched by her dark, gloomy ways? She did not, strange to say for one of her impetuous temper, go to Florence with these questions. A something about her awed her into silence; but the restraint she was obliged to put upon herself in regard to them, showed forth in little, energetic tosses of her head, short answers to ordinary questions—blunt, abrupt remarks, and an unconscious furtive watching of her sister's actions, as if from them she might gain some clue to the mystery that hung around her. Again, from this half-angry, half-petulant state, she passed to another. Mrs. Spafford seemed anxious to take all the care and burden on herself; her father's comfort, Clara's preferences, Leo's tastes, all were carefully studied; but her own—she had none; one thing was as good for her as another. It made no difference which room was set aside for her, or what was in it. What no one else cared for, or what was huddled away as of no earthly use, was what she appropriated to herself. When Clara remonstrated, as she stoutly did, she put her aside with a firmness and

gentle dignity that surprised and startled her. She looked at her, old before her time; she thought of her crushed and blighted life, and tears of compassion filled her eyes. All her hard, severe questions melted away, and kinder and more poignant ones came in their place. Was that life so full of sorrow to bring no blessed fruition? Was the present the only result of the dreadful past and the herald of a worse future? Could not her heart be softened? Could she not be brought back, like a little child, to love and confidence in the father? In her own way she tried to answer these questions. She helped her in the labor of the house. Mrs. Spafford, without murmur or complaint, would have done all herself; Clara would not let her; she portioned off the tasks of each, and faithfully performed her part; she spoke to her gently and with loving, pitying eyes; next to her father she became the tender object of her care. Mr. Kent noticed her bearing to her, and coming up to her one day, he placed his hand softly on her head, and said:

"God will bless you, Clara, for your goodness to your poor, heart-broken sister."

"I only do my duty, father," she answered.

"I know it, my child, I know it;" he returned, "but all would not be so ready to do it," and then he bowed his stately form, kissed her on her fore-

head, and hurried on to his room. Every morning found the sisters busy ; after dinner they sewed or read till tea-time ; in the evening one hour was devoted to conversation, one to reading aloud from some book of the father's choosing ; then came evening prayers, after which they retired to their respective rooms. This had been the evening custom since the death of Clara's mother. When Leo was placed in school, it was not discontinued ; father and daughter kept it up ; the conversation was generally on the reading of the night before. In this way the careful Christian father was able to note the thought that had been given it, and direct the minds of his children into healthful channels.

The fall had lingered long, the mild happy days seemed loth to depart ; the red and golden leaves, stirred by gentle breezes, fluttered noiselessly to the ground ; squirrels whisked and chattered about the branches of the trees, and busily laid up their winter store ; flowers quietly closed their petals, and one by one retired from the scene ; birds that with glad, exultant songs, had heralded in the spring, silently winged their flight to other climes ; the hills wore the brown robe of Autumn, and the winds, coming down from them, were filled with plaintive melodies ; but the sky, arching nearer the earth ; was cloudless, and the sun, if his rays

were paler and less piercing, still wore a smiling face.

It was a Saturday afternoon; Leo and Clara stood at one of the dining-room windows, conversing in a low tone. The next Monday morning he was to return to his studies, and the subject of their conversation was his near departure from home presently it turned to their sister—

“So she will not go,” Leo said, without turning his head and with his eyes still bent thoughtfully on the prospect without.

“No,” Clara replied, “she bade me wait a little longer, till she got rested. But I said, ‘Leo is going on Monday, and we must offer up a Holy Communion for him before he leaves home.’”

“What answer did she make to that?”

“She turned on me in her strange way, and begged me not to annoy her with any more words; she was worn out with them. Oh, Leo,”—she dashed the great tears from her eyes—“I don’t know what to make of it; I can’t make out what it means. I have asked myself time after time, ‘Is it for the dead she thus mourns, and mourns in so unhallowed a way.’”

Leo sighed heavily as he remarked: “I too have had such questions rise up and, like you, I have not been able to answer them. I have watched her carefully, and still have been left in the dark

She has suffered much and deeply ; sorrow, like a corroding ulcer, has eaten into all her thoughts and feelings. When I look at her worn face and thin sunken frame, I can hardly persuade myself that she was ever young or had bright hopes and gay fancies, or knew any thing of the spring time of life. It seems as if she must have always had wrinkles and been pale and bent and silent and grave."

"Do you remember her ever looking younger?"

"Yes, Clara, I remember well when her hair was as unstreaked with grey as yours, and when her cheek was much rosier."

"And she looked as young as I?"

"No, not so young, as you ; full middle age, and grave and silent even then. But in her silence and gravity, at that time, was a peace and tranquillity. She was—she must have been, I mean—far from happy, for Homer Spafford was one well calculated to make a wife and family wretched by his studied gloom and tyrannical exactions ; but she bore her cross like a Christian ; and had a sweet, patient and forbearing way with her. He is now gone, and that she should mourn him as she does, is to me a strange, blind mystery. But the human heart is a mystery, a baffling, insolvable mystery."

"I suppose it is, Leo ; so I have always heard." She drew up a couple of chairs for herself and

brother: "sit down," she said, "I want to tell you something. You know our reading the other night was from St Bernard, the chapter which treats of Abelard and his writings?"

"Yes."

"Well, in the remarks about the realists and nominalists, I had got some ideas for my article on Euler, and after Florence and I had retired to our rooms, I sat down to my desk and drew out my writing materials. Florence went right to bed, the door between our rooms being open, I soon heard her breathing easy and regular. I do not know how long a time had passed, but I was getting on finely with my subject when I thought I heard a groan. I threw down my pen and flew to Florence's room; she was still sleeping, but her arms were thrown up over her head, and her face was pale and convulsed. I hated to waken her, and stood at her bed wondering what I should do; presently she groaned again and then came muttered words. Some of them I caught: 'Homer Spafford,' 'wronged past forgiveness,' 'crime, unspeakable crime,' and then a shudder and cry so terrible that I placed my hand on her shoulder. She at once started up, and looked wildly at me. 'Yes, yes, I was dreaming,' she answered, 'and thank God it was only a dream. I thought Mr. Spafford was standing at my bedside, taunting me with bitter

words.' And again, Leo, although now wide awake she shuddered, and, covering her poor, pale face with her hands, cried as if her heart would break. I tried to comfort her, but she didn't seem to hear a word I said. Finally, in a sort of desperation I knelt down and repeated aloud the *Remember to our Blessed Lady*. When I finished it, I glanced at her; she had stopped crying, and was looking mournfully at me. All at once she reached out her hands, drew me to her, and called me one endearing name after another. By and by she began to talk more collectedly, and then came scene after scene of her past life; all she had suffered, all she had endured. In the multiplicity of her words she said something about the last great and overpowering wrong that had been heaped upon her. 'His failure, involving father in ruin, too,' I remarked, for I supposed that was what she meant. But she exclaimed, 'No, no, not that,' I begged her then to tell me what it was. She wouldn't say another word, but froze back into her old reserve, and became the bit of marble she generally is. I was provoked; after becoming so open to me, to grow all of a sudden so afraid to speak, lest she would let out too much. 'And you mourn for such a one as him,' I tartly said, 'and destroy your peace of mind and make yourself and every one around you wretched, because it pleased our dear Lord in His

mercy to call him away. I should think you would feel you had cause to rejoice instead of pining yourself to death.' "

"What did she say?"

"Say! she said not a word. I waited for her to make some remark, but passively folding her hands over the white spread, she let her eyes rest on them, and remained silent. This, of course, did not satisfy me, and with even more tartness than before I exclaimed, 'Florence, why don't you rouse up and shake off such unholy grief? Don't you know it is degrading to mourn for one so unworthy? I should think you would in your heart be glad to be released from him.' 'Mourn for him,' she repeated, and, Leo, there was an unmistakable tone of scorn in her voice. I was surprised, but looking up she said, what surprised me still more, 'What a strange infatuation is over you all! Not one of you can tell the difference between the signs of consuming grief and consuming hatred.' I begged her to explain herself; she answered by entreating me to go to bed, said I would be sick staying up all night in the cold, and a great deal more of the same sort, but not one word of what my ears ached to hear. The next day she was cold and impassible as ever. I wanted to refer again to the subject, but something about her forbade it."

"And you have said nothing to her about it since?"

"No; I've wanted to, but can't. Isn't it strange?"

"What, your not being able to broach the subject to her?"

"No, not that, but the way she is in; I can't make out what it means. More than once it has flashed upon me that it is not grief for the dead, but hatred to—"

"Surely," exclaimed Leo, interrupting her, "you don't think it's hatred to the dead. Hate the dead! Monstrous, unnatural thought!"

"Well, what else is it then?"

"I don't know, I wish I did; but I can't for a moment think it's that. It is so cruel, so unnatural to hate the poor, lifeless body mouldering in the grave, or the soul that once inhabited it, but is now released and in the hands of a just God! Oh, it can't be; Florence, in her grief, has not lost the instincts of humanity."

"You think such a thing impossible?"

"I think it very improbable. I don't know what to make out of her words; they might, may be do suggest what you say, but I would rather put another meaning to them."

"I hardly know, Clara; one thing I feel is cer-

tain : Florence does not, cannot hate the dead. But here comes father."

Clara hastened to open the door for him.

"I have been to church, my children," he said, carefully wiping his feet on the mat ; "I thought it best to go before tea. You are going too?"

"Yes father," Clara answered, while Leo assisted him in removing his overcoat. Although early in the cold season the chill of years was on him, and he was now wrapped as in the depth of winter. "Thank you, Leo," he said, in his gentle way ; "I will now sit down."

"But you will not be going out again to-day, father ; shall I not get you your slippers?"

"No, my child, I am going out again after I rest a little."

"Where, father?" Leo asked.

"To the corn house, to see Andrew about the thrashing."

"I have seen him. He will have it done by the middle of another week ; and now, Clara, get the slippers."

The slippers were got, his boots removed, and seeing him comfortably seated, a favorite book in his hands and spectacles on, she left the room to prepare the evening meal. She soon had it ready, the table set, the chairs placed round it ; then she called Mrs. Spafford, who descended from her

room and moved on to the head of the table, the place Clara insisted, as being the eldest sister, she must occupy. She was tall and spare, with a pale, worn countenance; her features were clear and regular, and of the class that bespeaks great refinement of mind, together with a remarkable degree of firmness. In youth she must have been beautiful, but, as Clara remarked, she had grown old before her time; age was upon her; her dark hair was thickly sprinkled with white, deep lines broke the smoothness of her brow, her eyes were sunken and faded, her cheeks thin and fallen, her lips drawn and compressed. During the meal, she spoke but little, and then only in brief answers to questions asked her; but in these answers it was noticed her voice was exquisitely sweet, with a peculiar plaintive ring in its tones. Clara was all cheerfulness, swallowed her tea in no time, made several very sagacious remarks about the weather, and referred learnedly to the atmospherical changes liable at that season of the year. Her father listened kindly, and gently made the necessary responses, while Leo looked at her tenderly and affectionately, and did not smile. He was beginning to find under her harmless pedantry a great deal of worth. He remembered what his father had once told him, when mildly reproving him for bantering her for bookish propensities. "You call

her Jack Lizard," he said, "and I think your comparison good, for do you recollect the amiable Addison's opinion of him? He looked upon him as a young tree shooting out into blossom before its time ; the redundancy of which, though it was a little unseasonable, seemed to foretell an uncommon fruitfulness ! I feel the same about our Clara. She has noble qualities of heart and brain, and by and by they will show." Leo thought they had shown. Her cheerfulness before her father, her hiding her uneasiness from him, her tenderness to her sister, her affection for him, her care and thought for all opened a page in her character to which his whole heart paid homage. After the meal, she hurriedly cleared away the dishes, swept up the crumbs, and brought out Leo's cap, comforter and gloves, and her own shawl and bonnet, and a couple of prayer books. Mrs. Spafford was about retiring to her room, but turning to Mr. Kent she asked :

"Father, is there any thing I can do for you?"

"Yes, my child," Mr. Kent answered, "Clara and Leo are going to the church, and I want you to read for me to-night. My eyes, you know, are getting dim."

She followed him to the library. He took from the shelves a book and put it in her hands : it was

Father Faber's "All for Jesus," a work her kind father thought would do her good.

Clara and Leo at once proceeded to the church. On the way Clara remarked: "This is the last Saturday you will be with us. Oh, how I shall miss you."

"I know you will, but keep up your heart. I will write often, and my letters shall be long. And do you write to me, and tell me all the particulars. It will comfort you to note them down, and comfort me still more to read them."

"I will, Leo, I will write you everything; but in your letters to father, say nothing of your uneasiness about Florence. It would only grieve him without helping her; you don't know how worried he was because he feared her gloom would have a depressing effect on me. I assured him to the contrary; and now he believes I am all hope and gladness, and I would not undeceive him. Let him have that bit of comfort." Tears welled up to her eyes, and, unable to force them back, rolled over her cheeks.

"Don't cry, Clara," he said, kindly pressing her hand.

"I'll try not to," she answered, wiping with her disengaged hand the tears away, and looking determined and resolute again. "Crying won't mend the matter," she added, in her matter-of-fact way.

"so I may as well keep dry eyed. But I tell you, I shall be lonely this winter. You gone, and the boys too ; I thought they, at least, would be with us."

"But it is best to have them in school. Here they could only grow up in ignorance and idleness."

"I suppose so," she abstractedly answered.

"And," continued Leo, "you will not be so lonely as you think. There are Kittie and Annie Bryan, two charming and amiable girls ; you will like them, and find them intelligent and warm-hearted, just such as any whom you would be glad to count among your friends."

"I had quite forgotten them. But you know they have not yet called on me."

"That was because they thought you would not want to see them till you got settled. You recollect you said something to that effect, one day, to Mr. Bryan."

"Yes, I know I did. But now they might come."

"And so they will, and, as I said before, you will like them."

They had now reached the church, and passing up the aisles, they knelt with the other penitents near the vestry door.

CHAPTER VI.

CLARA KENT's brow was clouded. It was two days since Leo left home ; and although she had wept bitterly at parting with him, she could not get over a little tartness to his memory. The Sunday evening before his departure, she had read to him her article on Euler ; she had labored hard upon it, and felt that her manner of treating her subject was such as to command respect and attention, and yet he had actually fallen asleep at the very time when she got to the deepest and most interesting part. On her rousing him up he vacantly exclaimed : " Yes, very good, very good indeed, exhaustive, thorough and all that." And when she asked him what was good, thorough and exhaustive, he answered, " Your story." Story ! she was not writing a story, and so she very quickly gave him to understand ; it was a critical dissertation, filled with profound thought, and battling with one of the most destructive errors of the day. And then she patiently and unweariedly went on to tell him how she had taken Euler to task for some of his philosophical absurdities, and he only remarked when she got through : " Euler was wrong in getting into such deep waters. He had better left the moral and stuck to the natural philosophy. There he did well enough but he was not satisfied with well enough ; he must

do better, and the consequence is he did worse. Don't be like him, Clara ; stick to your astronomical, historical, botanical and general articles, but leave psychological ones alone. It's too much for you ; you get beyond your depth before you know it. It would take a strong swimmer, and one used to battling the waves, to get through it safely and without harm." That was all he said, all the encouragement he gave her. And what was more provoking still, her father, for once in his life, sided against her. The matter referred to him, he said : "Your brother, my dear child, is right ; it is a subject beyond your years and strength." He did not say capacity, and at first there was a crumb of satisfaction in the thought ; but on reflection, even this faded away. The whole turn of his conversation showed it meant that and nothing else. Her brows met in a heavy frown, and her lips became compressed ; she looked at the several sheets of writing and thought of the laborious reading, wearying thought and wakeful nights they had cost her, and that was what father and brother pronounced upon them. She opened a book lying on the table beside her, but it could not draw her thoughts from the painful subject ; she wished Florence was with her ; she might have engaged her in conversation, that is, she might have talked to her, for that was what conversation with her

meant and so have whiled herself from the humiliating theme; but she staid in her room all the time she was not engaged in household labor, as if that little apartment, with its four walls, couple of pictures, one window, little stove, bed, chair and table, was her whole world. She took up some sewing, and vigorously attacked it; she did not lay it down after a few stitches, but kept at it, and ere long the frown faded, her lips lost their firm compression, a milder light shone from her eyes. She was thinking how kindly her father gave his advice. He bade her not to be discouraged; that she must not feel cast down because he could not approve of her last effort; that he felt sure, on a more congenial subject, she would have acquitted herself with credit; that it was not the first time a young mind had struggled with its own weakness and mistook big words for wisdom, neither would it be the last. And then he begged her to think no more of Euler and his explanations of the soul and the origin of evil, and, as her brother recommended, to leave such subjects for older and wiser heads. And he said he knew she would, for she was a good, dutiful child. She felt it hard to be good or dutiful in this respect; she wanted so much to go to it again, and prove by a final success that she had not undertaken what she was not capable of. Because she failed

once, was no sign she was bound to fail again. What was it Horace said, "Oft turn your style"—*stylus* he meant—"if you desire to write things that will bear a second reading." But a higher than Horace said something too about the obedience due to parents. She paused in her sewing, and rested her elbow on the table, her head on her hand. She might say a great deal on the subject, her brain was teeming with new thoughts, suggested, she felt, by the opposition she had met with ; her pale cheek glowed, her eye grew concentrated in its gaze, her mind expatiated in hard names, out-of-the-way terms and gloriously unmeaning sentences. But all the time, with her mental exaltation, was a dull, aching consciousness of wrong. The fourth commandment kept ringing in her ears, silencing the words of Horace. She rose and took several turns up and down the room. "Well," she exclaimed, again seating herself, "if I have got to throw that subject overboard I will just go at the Tower of Babel and the confusion of language." She seemed to think the confusion of language an appropriate subject after her late efforts. Glancing out of the window, she saw two young ladies walking up the path to the door. The next moment there was a little rap. She rose and opened the door.

"Kittie and Annie Bryan," she exclaimed, ex-

tending a hand to each, "I know I am not mistaken."

"You are not," Kittie answered; "your father told us you were now ready, and would be glad to see us, and so we came."

Clara led them to the stove and set chairs for them, she then took their cloaks and bonnets and laid them away in an adjoining room. Coming back she drew up a chair and seated herself opposite them, and with her hands crossed and leaning a little forward, and looking at them sharply, she said:

"The taller one, father told me, was the younger, and Annie by name, and the little one with yellow hair, blue eyes and rosy cheeks, was Kittie." It was hard to tell whether she was making this remark to the sisters or to herself. Her eyes were bent thoughtfully, searchingly upon them; she took in all the details of their looks, appearance and dress. The latter seemed greatly to please; the plain linen collar, the little brooch, the deep crimson dress, the dainty silk apron, the stout shoes—everything about them looked sensible, suitable for the season and place. Kittie's hair, hard to be confined in the net, was straying out here and there in soft-like rings; her cheeks, under her scrutinizing glance, grew rosier and rosier, but dimples broke their smooth surface, and smiles

played round the lips. She liked the frank, open face that was so unceremoniously gazing into hers ; she could not help thinking, with its great, earnest grey eyes, its high, broad forehead, full but not heavy, its fine straight nose, clear, waxen complexion and rich dark hair, that it was a very beautiful and expressive face. In her whole appearance was something that to Kittie seemed distinguished, but it did not dash her or make her feel uncomfortable with a sense of her own inferiority.

“ Well, Kittie, do you think you will like me ? ” she abruptly asked, finishing her scrutiny.

Kittie’s silvery laugh rung in the room. The idea that she had studied Miss Kent more than she had studied her, pleased her.

“ Yes, I know I shall,” she answered ; “ will you like me ? ”

“ Yes ? ”

“ And Annie too ? ”

“ I don’t know yet ; but I don’t think we will ever be very great enemies. Annie, I should say, was not one that you could get up a violent friendship for at the first glance. But I have the best hopes in the world that we will get along famously, and be wonderfully intimate with each other in the course of time. Do you go out much ? ”

“ No, not a great deal.”

“ But you will come often and see me ? ”

“Yes, if we can we certainly will; for to one that’s been used to society, Tasso will be dull enough.”

“Oh as to being used to society, I don’t know as I can lay much claim to it. I went some the last year, but this running about from house to house, sipping sour wines, eating late indigestible dinners, and picking one’s acquaintances to pieces, I did not like.”

“Is that society?” Anna gravely asked.

“It is about all I found it to be; but for the etceteras, you may throw in attending parties where you see no one you care for, and hear nothing that interests you, and are obliged to say something to match what you hear; and then the operas, where the music deafens you, and the returning to your carriage after the hulalaloo is over, is as much as your life is worth. Oh, society may be delightful to some, to me it was tiresome to the last degree.”

“Well, then Tasso will not be so disagreeable to you, and you will not be lonesome. We have been thinking ever since we heard of your coming to Tasso to live, that you would be so dull and dreary here, and hardly know what to do with yourself or how to spend your time.”

“As to what I am to do, I find I shall have plenty to keep me comfortably busy, and the

spending of my time is the least of my troubles. But still, I repeat, I shall be glad to have you and Annie come and see me as often as you can. A little genial companionship will be a comfort to me. Except from father, I have never had it; I would now like it. I would not say it if I did not mean it."

"And we will come, Miss Kent," Annie exclaimed, "we will be glad to. It will be a great joy and comfort to us, too."

There was a heartiness in her tones that caused Clara to look up in surprise.

"Are you fond of reading?" she asked.

"Yes."

"What kind of books?"

Annie for a moment was posed, and Kittie answered for her. "Oh, we like our paper, and magazine, and stories, and such things as come in our way."

Clara did not frown. She only looked kind, pitying and patronizing; she must not expect too much from the country maidens; doubtless they did the best they could under the circumstances. They had not her library to cull from, or her father, to elucidate and make plain, and, above all, her masculine mind. They were good, amiable girls, and did the best they could. She rose, and put more wood in the stove, glanced at the clock,

looped farther back the crimson curtain, and getting a stool, seated herself at the girls feet.

"I will tell you how it is," she said, looking up into their faces, "you read the best you can get hold of, and enjoy it?"

"Yes, indeed we do."

"And if you could get better you would enjoy that too?"

"To be sure we would."

"Well then you can draw from our library whatever you like."

"You are too kind, Miss Kent."

"Not at all. It won't hurt my enjoyment of a book to know you have read it; in no way will it detract from its merit. But what paper do you take?" A prominent Catholic paper was mentioned.

"A good one," she pronounced, "sensible and strong; no half-way measure about it; never in doubt as to what it means. What magazine?"

The name was given, and like the paper, it called forth a warm approval. "You couldn't take a better," she averred; "now for the stories." These were gone over, and then there was a pause. "I don't know about them," she said after a while. "never read them, and of course can't pronounce upon them."

"But you have heard of them?"

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"Yes, I have heard considerable raving **about** them. People going off into ecstasies over **their** style. But the fact is, I never read stories myself."

"Never read them?" both the sisters exclaimed in a breath.

"No," she solemnly answered, "never do ; never get time."

"You never get time ! Why what on earth have you been doing all your life ?"

"Reading heavy and useful works, and filling my mind with solid information."

Kittie arched her eyebrows in unfeigned astonishment, and a good deal of admiration. The idea of a young girl like Clara only reading for solid information, and not occasionally for amusement, was almost startling to her.

"Only for solid information?" she repeated aloud.

"That is all," Clara, with a smiling face and a sagacious nod of her head, answered. She then enumerated the learned authors she had read, mentioned several political characters with a familiarity that went to impress her listeners that she was perfectly well acquainted with their views and sentiments, and spoke delightedly of the last presidential message. It was a masterpiece of eloquence, she declared.

"And you read it all?" Kittie gasped.

"I did, and could have read it a dozen times."

"And do you think, Miss Kent, such reading instructive?"

It was Annie that put the question. Way back in her quiet eyes was a deep light, but her face was gravity itself. It was Clara's turn to be amazed. "Do you doubt it?" she asked.

"Yes, I do; I have tried many a time to get through these tiresome messages and I have never yet succeeded. I would read some of the paragraphs, glance over a few more, and finding nothing in them to repay a perusal, throw them aside; and go to something else. Ladies, if they wish, may read them; but to be droning over them, looks to me a much more wasteful way of spending my time than reading good, useful stories.

"Useful!" Clara contemptuously repeated.

"Yes, useful, for many an excellent lesson is learned from them. Speaking of Ancient History, you mentioned Rollin."

"Yes, I know I did."

"Do you recollect, in reproducing Xenophon's Cyropedia, or life of Cyrus, what he says of Xenophon?"

"I know he admires Xenophon's style, and places more confidence in him, as a general thing, than he does in Herodotus. But what do you know of Rollin and his preferences? I thought

you and Kittie only read stories and such like?" Her clear eyes, so full of candor and innocence, beamed kindly, amicably upon her. Her words, uttered in another tone, might have been offensive, but in the friendly, cordial voice in which they were pronounced, they fell kindly on the ear.

"We have read Rollin and other good authors besides him. When you visit us you will see their works scattered here and there throughout the house. To say that we have pored over them as you have, or read as many, or dipped as deeply into their thoughts or feelings, would not be true; but what we have read we have enjoyed as much. I doubt not, as if we had read more. But to the point. Do you recollect the eulogium Rollin pronounces on Xenophon for the excellent way he takes to give a lesson on sobriety?"

"Yes, but what has that to do with the question at issue?"

"Simply this, that the story form of giving this lesson he considered the very best he could have chosen; because it seems it would reach the greater number in that form and do the most good; he says he might have done it in a grave, learned manner, but he puts his instruction in the mouth of a child, and conceals it under the veil of a story, and the skill of the historian in so doing cannot be too much admired. Many a story contains as use-

full lesson as that, and in reading and trying to profit by them, I do not think my time misspent, or that I am doing a foolish thing. Stories that give good, moral lessons are not to be despised; they have a commendable object in view, and should be respected. In their own way—and that this way is worthy of praise and not of censure, I have shown—they effect their purpose.”

Without making any comment on her words, Clara abruptly asked, “What society have you been used to?”

“Kittie told you that we do not go much.”

“I know, but in the little that you do go, what kind of people do you come across?”

“Why do you want to know?”

“I have my reasons,” she smilingly said.

“You think what you have heard could not have come altogether from a country home?”

“It is certainly not exactly what I expected from reports that have come to me of country life, and its advantages in an educational point.”

“I suppose so. I know I have read of country people being by no means overstocked with knowledge or ideas; and in many instances the account may be true, but not, Miss Kent, in all. As every where else, you will find different degrees of intelligence—some who delight in books and periodicals, and talk of them, and refer to them on

all occasions ; who take them, as it were, into their family councils and look upon them as living, speaking, friends ; and others, again, who consider such books and learning the greatest and most dangerous folly. In their estimation a turn for books is a sure sign one is born to be poor."

"I suppose they think they cannot attend to two things at once, and consequently in the reading of books the crops suffer."

"Yes, that is their opinion, and yet father says he has watched pretty closely those around us, and he is satisfied that it is not the best informed who are the poorest farmers ; that, as a general thing, those that are anxious to improve their own and their children's minds, as well as their farms, are the most prosperous. To be sure, there is now and then one that, idly thumbing books, neglects his work, and falls back, but so there are many that, never looking into a book, do the same."

"But," exclaimed Kittie, "we must not forget to tell Miss Kent of a family that has lately moved to Tasso."

"Sure enough, Kittie, Mr. Hascall. He lives just out of the village on the road leading up to Centre Hill." Annie leaned back in her chair, leaving to Kittie the pleasing duty of telling Clara all about the family. Mr. Hascall, on retiring from business, had come to Tasso to live. He had a

handsome residence, with grounds tastefully laid out around it, and every thing grand and beautiful within it, according to Kittie's account. Mrs. Hascall was a convert, Mr. Hascall was always a pious Catholic. They had two children, a son and daughter. The son's name was Jerome, the daughter's Christine. Kittie and Annie became acquainted with the latter when attending St. — Academy. She was about their age, and a class-mate of theirs. They were much attached to her in school, and represented her to Clara as a very pious, grave, thoughtful girl. Jerome was at present at home, but proposed going west in the spring; he was a great friend to their brother, and they liked him very much. Neither brother nor sister had much pride; they were too pious, too kind and sensible. The report Clara heard pleased her, and she expressed a wish to get acquainted with them.

"And nothing," exclaimed Kittie, "would delight them more. We have told them all about your father and his family, and they could hardly wait till you got settled before calling. Now you may expect them any day."

"You say Christine was your class-mate; was she a good scholar?"

"Yes, very thorough and good. She is one of those quiet, still people that make no show, but at

the same time are far from dull. She graduated this summer with us, and went through her examination with the greatest imaginable ease. To us it was hard work, and we were about used up by the time it was over, but she hardly minded it."

"How long since they came here to live?"

"About a year ago."

"Strange that just on the eve of their daughter leaving school, they should retire to such an out-of-the-way place."

"Her parents have lost several daughters from consumption, and that is the reason they chose this part of the country, they heard it was so healthy. They are devoted to Christine, and she is most tenderly attached to them."

"Does she look consumptive?"

"She is very slight, and has the clearest complexion, but I don't know as you would think her consumptive by her looks."

"Is she fond of active exercise?"

"No, not at all. She would stay in her own room poring over music, drawing, and books all day, if her mother and father would let her; but they insist on her daily riding or walking out. They have a beautiful flower garden and a gardener to attend it. But there is considerable clipping and weeding left for her to do. Oh, you should have seen it when she got home in

July. It was perfectly lovely ; over fifty varieties of roses, and fuchias, verbenas and geraniums without number. And then their conservatory ; it opens on the dining room, and in summer is a cool, fragrant shady place ; but the winter is the time of its greatest charm. In the parlors you look out and see the snow lying like a white spread on the fields, or piled up in great drifts in the roads ; you hear the hoarse winds whistling round the house ; you see the sleighs with their fur-wrapped occupants, darting past ; you hear the jingle of the sleigh bells. Everything about you speaks of winter ; even the pictures on the wall are mostly winter sketches—scenes from the Alps, Dr. Kane in his winter quarters, Christmas on the Rhine, and others. In the midst of pleasant winter thoughts, you are called to dinner, and lo and behold what a change ! From the poles you have suddenly passed to the tropics. You see, you hear nothing but summer around you. Flowers in marble vases are on the table ; evergreens shade the front windows, the wide glass doors of the conservatory are thrown back, and rare and beautiful flowers fill every space from the roof down ; birds in their silver cages flutter joyously, and sing as if their little throats would burst with melody. You rub your eyes and wonder if you are in fairy-land. Before the meal is over, you smile at your folly in

thinking it winter in the parlors. You have feasted on strawberries, and tasted the excellence of lettuce ; you have inhaled the fragrance of flowers, and listened to the most lovely bird concert. Your heart is glad and lightsome, you riot in the joy of spring-time and summer."

"And after the meal, what comes then ? back to the parlors and a painful wakening to the winter again?"

"No, Miss Kent, no painful wakening, only a pleasant coming back from fairy-land, that is all. The illusion is perfect, but the awaking from it, unlike most illusions, is not painful. You only revel in the thought of the pleasant dream you have had ; and it lingers agreeably in your memory till you are again called to tea, and then you live the dream over again."

"Tea," exclaimed Clara, starting up, "that reminds me that I have tea to see to. I had almost forgotten it. You will excuse me a few minutes."

The girls assured her they would, but if she would let them help her to get it, nothing would please them more. She readily consented, and together they left the sitting-room and repaired to the kitchen. They joyously obeyed the orders she good-naturedly gave ; there was a great deal of passing from one room to the other. Clara carefully, in the midst of her preparations for setting

the table, laid aside her manuscript, which had been hid from sight by the sewing thrown over it, and said nothing of it or her writings for the present : but she could not help thinking how surprised they would be when they heard what a writer she was. The meal ready, her father came in and Florence was called down from her room. After a friendly introduction she sank back into her usual silence, and the sisters in her presence found it hard to keep up the flow of conversation that had made the afternoon pass so agreeably away. Clara was as talkative as ever, but their answers to her remarks grew more and more constrained, till Mr. Kent, feeling a pity for their embarrassment, took the conversation altogether in his own hands, by telling them all about a new book he had just read : "the Spirit of St. Francis De Sales." He dwelt on its beauties and pointed out its excellence, and he that so closely resembled the blessed saint in the holiness and gentleness of his life, grew mildly eloquent in descanting on the merciful, loving and forgiving spirit evinced by the great St. Francis, under every circumstance of his career, no matter how humiliating and trying. He spoke to all, but his eye rested the oftenest on Florence.

After the meal, as in the short days of early winter, night comes quick, the girls promising soon

to come again, and begging the favor of Clara visiting them, took their leave.

"Well, my child," said her father, when they were gone, "I hope you had a pleasant visit."

"I have, father," she answered, "I have. I like them; they are charming girls. But somehow I feel I shall be sadder for their visit."

"How so?" was kindly asked.

"I shall want them again to-morrow when I sit down after dinner, and not having them I shall be lonely."

"Clara, dear, that is a childish feeling. You do not, my child, expect always to be amused?"

"No, father, by no means; but the enjoyment of wholesome and genial companionship can hardly be called amusement. I hate a frivolous, pleasure-seeking character, it is so intensely selfish; therefore I try to do my duty, whether it is agreeable or not, and not stupefy myself with foolish regrets at what was, or what might have been. Changes belong to this world, and we must not be surprised when we meet them and they prove otherwise than pleasant. We must accept them, and if we can't do it gladly, we must at least do it sensibly, like Christians, knowing that never will the Cross be greater than we can bear if we will only lean on the promise of the blessed Saviour while carrying it. Doing this, under every circumstance will our

yoke be easy and our burden light. Father, do you perceive, I am repeating to you your own words?" She drove back the tears and tried to look up into his face smiling.

"Yes, my child," her father replied, "I am glad you remember them so well. And they comfort you?"

"Comfort me! You don't know anything about it. Sometimes I feel fairly desperate, and they come right before me like the whisperings of my good angel. I listen, and they smooth down all my worried feelings; I look at them, and they grow luminous before me, as if about to arrange themselves into a crystal crown." Her father smiled upon her, and again her eye grew clear and bright. With a light step she cleared away the tea-things, lit the lamp in the library, and called Florence down from her room. That night, after the conversation on the reading of the preceding evening, and the reading and night prayers were over, her father softly laid his hand on her head before rising from her knees, and she felt as if wings had brushed against her hair, and as if something white and shining had fallen around her and rested upon her. It was her father's blessing.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. HASCALL'S residence was situated on a rising eminence, half a mile out of the village. It was a large, stately building; the north and west sides were shaded from the cutting winds by grand old trees of forest growth; the east and south open to the genial rays of the sun and the balmy breeze that, unimpeded, swept around them; a fine lawn studded here and there with shrubbery, reached down to the iron fence that separated the grounds from the highway; a little to the right of it was the flower garden, where during the summer months a multitudinous number of blossoms charmed the eye with their glorious hues and filled the air with fragrance. But now they were gone, the beds stript and bare; the trellis frames and arbors looked cold and desolate, as did also the maple, elm and chestnut, lining the broad avenue leading to the front door; but the splendid pines and full branched *arbor vitæ* guarding the dining-room windows and the west side of the conservatory, still retained their dark robed verdure. The property had belonged to a wealthy gentleman, but he dying, it had fallen into the hands of distant heirs and was advertised for sale. Mr. Hascall became the purchaser, and after some little improvements and a

thorough refurnishing of the house, moved his family to it.

Mrs. Hascall and her son and daughter, a few days after Annie and Kittie Bryan's visit to Clara Kent, called on Mr. Kent and Clara, and the next morning, seated in one of the parlors, they were discussing the new neighbors. Mrs. Hascall was a tall, slender lady, past middle age, dressed with the gravity becoming her years. She had a kind, motherly face and a soft mellow voice. Christine, was tall, like her mother, and exceedingly slight. Her hazel eyes were large, and calm, and tranquil in expression. Peace rested on all her features; her movements were peculiarly still and quiet, her voice low and vibrating. She impressed one singularly, there was something so spirit-like about her. Her countenance, in its purity and holiness, brought to mind the sweet face of the Madonna. The favored child of wealth, her heart was a stranger to pride; with every wish gratified, she could feel for the unfortunate; from an elegant home she could familiarly visit the homes of the poor; and by her gentle voice, kind bearing and generous bounty, relieve the needy without wounding in the least their sometimes over sensitiveness. In her humility was a serene dignity that repulsed coarseness and rudeness; wherever she went she was treated with courtesy and respect. The violent and passion-

ate grew silent and meek in her presence, and listened to her words when they would have turned scornfully and defiantly from the remonstrances of others. Quiet and unassuming in her manners, those of her own circle hardly realized the good she was achieving. They called her pious, grave and thoughtful, because she went daily to Mass, and was not given to laughter or hilarity, and her remarks were well-timed and to the point. But the poor spoke enthusiastically of her goodness and pointed her out as one whom riches did not spoil.

Her brother was altogether of a different type ; not that he lacked a kind heart, or was devoid of those sentiments of respect, reverence and gratitude which lift the soul in adoration to God ; with his piety and charity was a natural liveliness of character, a keen perception of the ridiculous and a ready appreciation of humor. His countenance plainly showed it ; his bluish grey eye was quick, bright and sharp ; his mouth was neither large nor small, but the lips had the upward curve at the corners which physiognomists say reveal the propensity to laugh. He was of medium height, with well knit, compact form ; looking at him lazily reclining on the sofa, listening to his mother's and sister's words, agreeing with them in the main but qualifying them in several essential points with his dry

remarks, you could not help thinking, however well he might carry with him into the noon-day brightness of middle age, or the evening shades of declining life, his "charity for all, and enmity to none," he would never quite get over his enjoyment of the weakness and eccentricities of those around him. Another might weep over them as showing the nothingness of man, but he was not a Heraclitus ; a melancholy philosophy was not suited to his temperament. He strongly resembled his father ; they both had the same outline of feature, the same form, the same complexion, color of hair and eyes, and yet the general expression was totally different. The father was slow, heavy and phlegmatic. Shrewd enough in business, he had the appearance of one that would never succeed in life. You would suppose his wealth had been inherited, and would wonder that he had kept it ; that it had not, without his hardly knowing how, slipped through his fingers. But this was wrong ; he had made every cent of his property himself, and he knew right well, once made, how to manage it. With his dull eye, and slow, sleepy way of speaking, he had a clear insight of arithmetic, and knew, without making a single mistake, how to bring out the sum total at the end of the year. His dull eye could see a good bargain, and his slow hand could reach out to grasp it at the favorable moment.

Strictly honest in all his business transactions, his success gave him no cause for harrowing remorse. He counted his gains with a kindly, grateful feeling, and every one coming in contact with him enjoyed to a certain extent the easy state of his conscience, in the benignity which that easy state threw around him. His very bearing had something tranquilizing in it. His usual way at home was to get a newspaper, slowly and meditatively spread it out, and calmly ensconced behind it, keep his ear open to the general conversation. In neither he seemed to take any great interest, and yet he contrived to get a pretty good run of both. He learned the state of the markets, gleaned the general topics of the day, and took in the editorial remarks, and answered questions put to him ; made comments, and gave his opinion all in the softest, quietest manner possible, and in a voice that sounded very much as if he was reading what he said right out of his paper. This gave a curious tone to his remarks, and in the estimation of some threw an interest over them they would not otherwise have possessed.

Mrs. Hascall expressed herself greatly pleased with the appearance of Mr. Kent and his daughters. Mrs. Spafford's recent bereavement was matter enough to enlist her kindest sympathies ; but Clara's care of her and her father could not be too

highly extolled. Christine heartily agreed with her and added ;

“What a blessing, mother, she is so cheerful under their reverse of fortune.”

“Yes, my dear, a great blessing indeed. To hear her talk you would hardly suppose she felt it at all.”

“No, you would not,” said Jerome, quietly clipping, with a pair of scissors he had taken from his sister’s work-box, the leaves from a handsome companula standing near him. “I for one would certainly think not, from what she said to me.”

“What was it was asked from behind the newspaper.

“Mother was pressing her to come and see us, and said she knew it must be lonesome to her, this living in the country ; and she hastened to assure her that it was not at all lonesome, that she did not mind leaving the city, and that she liked the country far better than she thought she would ; that she never looked on the grand, old hills all around us, that she did not think what a world of toil and trouble they would have saved Nebuchadnezzar, if he had only had one of them to build his famous gardens on. I was a little startled at the idea ; it was, I confess, quite new to me, and so I told her. Whereupon she favored me with a most interesting account of Queen Amytis, Nebu-

chadnezzar's worthy spouse. She was from Media, and brought to the low, marshy land of Babylon, her soul longed for the lofty, woody eminences of her own country; and Nebuchadnezzar, a worthy pattern for husbands to all future generations, built those wondrous hanging gardens to please her, and gained thereby for himself the undying honor of erecting or making one of the seven wonders of the world." His manner was quiet, his voice clear and grave, but his eyes twinkled and a broad smile played round his lips.

"Why, Jerome, how can you report her words in that style?"

"Did or didn't she say all that?"

"Why, she spoke of the woody and mountainous land of the Medes, and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar and his wife Amytis, but she was all gravity and decorum while referring to them."

"Well, am I not all gravity and decorum while repeating her learned remarks?"

"You throw a disagreeable tone over them, and you know you do."

"Begging your pardon, my dear sister, I do no such a thing. The Gardens of Babylon were remarked the seventh wonder of the world."

"Among the seven wonders. Jerome, not the seventh."

"No, the seventh, exactly the seventh, I will have them no other ; and it strikes me, Miss Kent is herself the eighth."

"Jerome, how can you run on so ; Clara Kent is a most worthy and inestimable person."

"She is, Christine, I perfectly agree with you. Her venerable years call forth one's respect, for the wisdom and experience which a long life has garnered are not to be lightly spoken of."

"How old is she ?" Mr. Hascall, without taking his eyes from the newspaper, asked.

"By her looks, father, I should judge her to be eighteen or nineteen, by her words a hundred. Something that she said about the hills reminded me of a description in Marmion, and I referred to it. 'Oh that is poetry,' she exclaimed. I bowed my head, and thinking of a certain young lady I know," he glanced at his sister, "who goes off into raptures over the stanzas of Una, Longfellow and others. I remarked that I doubted not she was a lover of poetry. 'Not by any means,' she returned, and then she told when she was young she liked poetry quite well, but for the past years she had had weightier matters to attend to. I had a great and very natural curiosity to know what these weightier matters were, but through a rustic timidity forbore asking. Will you do me the favor Christine, the next time you see her, to ascertain

- what these weightier matters were ; I feel it important I should know."

"No, indeed, I will not. Whatever they were they have admirably fitted her for the sober realities of life. I think I never saw one that had a more practical turn."

Jerome laughingly repeated, "a more practical turn!"

"Yes," said Mrs. Hascall, raising her eyes from her netting, "a more practical turn. She has good common sense, and shows it in the way she bears their reverse ; and then with her common sense is a very sincere and earnest piety. I saw it in her anxiety to fulfil the duties of her station, in her cheerful resignation to the will of our dear Lord, and in her reverence and respect for her father."

"All excellent traits, mother, but allow me to disagree with you in her practical turn. She thinks she is practical, and on the strength of it assumes a very matter-of-fact way, but under her matter-of-fact way I perceive a very decided ideal turn. I do not think she dwells with delight on brave heroes and lovely heroines ; her proclivities are not exactly in that direction, but she revels in day dreams, and catches glimpses of clouds rosier than ours and skies sunnier than belong to earth."

Christine hastily interrupted him.

"Never again in your life, Jerome," she exclaim-

ed, "pride yourself on reading character. You would make out she had spent all her time in reading novels, and she assured me that she never read one in her life."

"Nevertheless she has managed to make out an deal world around her, and to live very comfortably in it. It is not always necessary, my wise, grave sister, to pattern after what you read ; if you have a little originality of your own, you can, out of very prosy materials, make a considerable advance in the romance line without ever reading a novel."

Christine's pale cheek flushed as she reproachfully exclaimed : "You are perverse, Jerome, and no use of arguing with you. You see what you want to see, and not what is before you. Clara Kent is no idle-day dreamer."

A remark came from behind the newspaper : "Miss Kent is a remarkable young lady, learned and sensible."

Christine looked up gratefully at her father, Jerome turned with a broader smile than ever to the window. It was evident he found in the remark something he highly enjoyed.

"Sensible, and at the same time learned," he repeated to himself, "that would indeed be enough to make her remarkable. Father is quite right in his ideas." The young cynic glanced complacent-

ly out of the window and watched the large flakes falling thick and fast. He turned his sharp eyes, twinkling with ill-concealed mirth to his sister. Her head was bowed over her work, embroidering a pair of slippers for her father; the long curling lashes cast a shadow on her delicate cheek, her light brown ringlets strayed carelessly over her smooth brow, partially veiling her face; he thought of the sister she so much resembled, sleeping in the quiet cemetery. The gay smile faded from his eyes, leaving a tender light behind. That sister had been so dear to him. Of the four called early home to God, she was his favorite, only two years between them, and those two years on her side. She was two years his senior, and she never assumed any authority over him, which she might easily have done; she was so much wiser and graver, never turned coldly from him when he brought some boyish grievance to her, but listened kindly and was so soothing and sympathizing, that however determined to be wretched and disconsolable at the glaring injustice heaped upon him, he always left her strengthened and comforted. A train of saddened thought was stirred, his mirth-loving face grew sober; costly marble marked the resting places of his sisters, and sombre pines murmured their *De Profundis* over them; the home circle

was smaller, only him and Christine remained. He looked at her with an unutterable affection, his heart sickened as he thought she too might go. Oh, Death! how beneficent the influence thou exertest. We mourn our friends, we bear the memory of them ever in our hearts; the light of their loving smiles play round our paths; the tones of their voices linger in our ears; we reach our hands, and lo, there are no warm returning grasps; we rub our eyes, but the veil that hides them from our sight is impenetrable to mortal gaze; with the sense of blissful nearness is the knowledge of infinite distance; we cannot go to them till the Father calls us, but in the meantime we grow gentler, kinder and more tender to those that are still with us, that we see in the flesh, and converse with ear to ear. Oh, death! thou drawest the home links tighter and tighter, and under thy dusky shadow a holy and subdued affection lights up the family hearth. Jerome had laughed at Clara Kent's peculiarities, and the heart of his sister was grieved; he would speak of her father; there they could meet on even ground, for both were struck with his grand and noble bearing. In a hearty and cordial tone, but with a manner rather too careless to convey the idea of perfect ease of mind, but which was evidently assumed for that purpose, he remarked:

"I certainly never saw a finer appearing person than Miss Kent's father. What a bearing he has, calm and majestic enough for an emperor, and mild and gentle as a little child. I don't wonder at Mr. Bryan's enthusiasm about him. He is just the one to lead and govern others and be their model in all that is grand and good."

Christine raised her head. "Oh, yes, Jerome," she exclaimed, "he is a noble-looking man, Christian seems written all over his face, and the tones of his voice ring with the same word."

"I have thought several times," said Jerome, comfortably seating himself in an arm-chair near his sister, "of one of his remarks."

"What was it?"

"You recollect, as we were standing at the open door some children went talking and laughing past."

"Yes, I recollect it perfectly well, and pausing in what he was saying, he looked at them and smilingly observed. 'There goes a band of immortals.' The expression struck me too, and what he further said on the subject pleased me much."

"When I told him I would never again see a group of children without thinking of his words, and he replied 'that the proudest monument of man's labor will crumble into dust, but they will en-

dure forever, the stamp of immortality is upon them,' was that it, Christine?"

"Yes, Jerome, and when you remarked, 'their souls, you mean,' he answered, 'of course, of course, children are bright spirits, only a bit of mold wraps them around, but that will wear off and then eternity is before them.' How grand and dignified he looked saying it. Not one word had been said of their reverse or Mrs. Spafford's sorrow or bereavement, but as she uttered those words I am sure he thought of it, and weighing the cares and afflictions of time in the balance of eternity, felt how light and transitory they were."

"But," said Mrs. Hascall, "it seems Mrs. Spafford does not share his tranquillity of spirit. I noticed more than once during our call a look of desolate wretchedness pass over her countenance."

"Yes, mother," rejoined Christine, "so did I, and I wanted so much to comfort her, but was at a loss how to do it. I sat and thought of one thing after another to say, but did not have the courage to bring any of it out, and finally gave over the attempt."

"I think it was as well, for I doubt if your soothing words would have had the desired effect. Mrs. Hascall's countenance bore a look of kind pity. Mr. Hascall softly laid aside his paper; a careful observer might have noticed a still keen interest

the conversation had arrived at a point that required his undivided attention. He did not show it by eager questions, or even by directing his gaze to the speakers ; he gently sighed, and fixing his eyes thoughtfully on the carpet, listened with open ears. Something that Bryan had told him of Spafford made him curious to know how his wife took his death ; something beside what Bryan had told him, had reached him, as a rumor only, 'tis true, but a strange, incredible rumor, that had made his slow pulse thrill. He had never spoken of it to mortal, for it was not in his nature to think out loud or take the public into confidence. He could not make his head a tinkling bell ringing out every thing that came into it. Any thing that by chance, as he gravely on more than occasion had remarked, got there, generally staid there."

"I don't doubt you, mother," said Christine, "for when you spoke of Agatha's and Mary's death at home, and Harriet's and Emma's away from us, she hardly seemed to hear you."

"No, Christine, she did not. She mechanically replied, 'the loss of friends was a bitter grief, but there was a bitterer grief than that.'"

Mr. Hascall raised his eyes from the carpet and let them rest on his wife.

"It was a strange answer, mother."

"It was, and the pallor that came over her face

while making it was stranger still. I don't know why, but something about her stirs a deep pain in my heart. It is not for her widowhood and straightened means, for I see others widowed and poor, and while I sympathize with them in their affliction, I can always draw some little consolation out of their lot. The great hereafter opens before me, and turning from earth I can look upward. The more we are in sorrow the nearer we seem drawn to God, and the dearer we are in His eyes."

"But with her it is different?"

"Yes, Jerome, I hate to say it, but I see nothing but the sorrow dark and impenetrable, with no bright opening overhead."

Mr. Hascall softly rose and walked up to the register as if for greater warmth. "I hear her health is poor," he carefully observed, "and I think it must be so, as she does not go to church. I have not seen her at Mass."

"No, she does not go, and Clara says her health is miserable."

"Then, I suppose Father Doyle visits her occasionally."

"I don't know about that, father."

"But he has called on them ; I heard him speaking of it a few days ago. Like you, he was much impressed with Mr. Kent's appearance."

"Well, it seems Mrs. Spafford did not see him,

for in something I was saying I happened to mention his name, and from that I expressed a certainty that they would like him, he had such kind and gentle ways, and Clara said, 'Yes she knew they would, but Florence had not yet seen him.' And now I recollect she did speak of his calling, but added that Florence was in her room at the time. So it was not to see her he called."

"It seems so," Mr. Hascall slowly and thoughtfully returned. He raised his hand to his head, a movement of his when any deep, mental labor suddenly rose before him, glanced vacantly at the chair he had been occupying, but instead of returning to it, walked to the window nearest him, pushed aside the rich damask curtain and looked out. He did not whistle, but contracted his lips as if to let out a note or so, changed his mind, and silently drummed with his fingers on the window sash. "It's strange, strange," he murmured, after several moments cogitation.

"What is strange?" Mrs. Hascall asked.

"Nothing, my dear," he quietly answered.

The boy came in with the mail, and in the pleasant bustle of looking over letters and newspapers, his perturbation was not noticed.

CHAPTER VIII.

CLARA KENT must have possessed a practical turn, notwithstanding Jerome Hascall's opinion to the contrary. The weeks passed and she did not weary of her household duties, but faithfully attended to them and to her father, and found time beside to write and study a good deal. Not that the articles that were to help along that large octavo volume, which rose up so pleasantly before her imagination, were thereby increased. So far from that, several rather bulky ones had disappeared from her store, and were not yet replaced, and Clara was not sure they ever would be. They were not quite so profound and thorough as she once thought them. She was young, 'tis true, when she wrote them, but the world was not waiting for callow effusions and would have no tenderness for weak and faltering flights. Now that she was older and more experienced, she must look them carefully over and see wherein they could be bettered. This was not a very agreeable task, but she went at it with a sort of merciless energy; the consequence was, that all the earliest efforts of her pen were ruthlessly committed to the flames. The later ones still possessed charms for her, and their general excellence of tone and style soothed her in

a great measure for the shortcomings of the others. "I was young when I wrote them," she complacently said to herself; "I can do better now," she triumphantly added. She told her father what she had done, and he highly approved it. She did not take to the Hascalls; she liked Christine and her mother, but confidentially told Kittie and Annie Bryan that Mr. Hascall seemed to her very much like a wooden image, and Jerome had a levity about him she could not endure. She could not bring herself to repeat her visit to their house; they, however, called on her several times during the winter, and much to her pain and chagrin, it was always with Jerome she found herself conversing. He readily agreed with everything she said, and when in her embarrassment her words were like to leave her, gallantly came to her rescue; he seemed to have the greatest possible relish for those subjects that possessed so much interest for her; and yet she was not satisfied; she did not like him. She thought it over in the stillness of her room, and wondered why it was. She did not particularly care for knowing, and that was one provoking feature about it, it would come up, and she would find herself weighing his words, dwelling upon the tone in which they were uttered, the play of his features and the light and expression of his eyes; in fine, upon everything about

him, and never in a kind or genial mood. She wanted to talk of something else than books, and the ideas arising from their perusal. But what? what subject should she choose? she scarcely knew. It would not do to refer to their old home; ~~this~~ she instinctively felt would be a sore topic to her father and sister, but even if it were not, what interest would they, strangers, have in it. There was nothing about their former acquaintances that would pay for dragging them into the conversation. They did not know Leo or Florence's children, so she could not say much about them. She might tell when she heard from them, that they were well and doing well, and maybe add, what they already knew, that they would be home another vacation, and then that subject would be done with. She knew nothing of their friends and acquaintances, and did not want to put upon herself the task of inquiring, like a census officer, their names, ages, occupations, place of residence, etc., etc. She hardly thought it would do if she did. She might talk of their beautiful flowers, and she had, and found to her mortification that it landed her back again into the province of books. After dwelling a while on the conservatory, Christine referred to the garden, and spoke of the bouquets she gathered there early in the morning, and the necessity of clipping the flowers before the dew was off them, whereupon Jerome

went into ecstasies about the vapory moisture calling it diamond sparkles, pearly drops the blossoms shed on being severed from the parent stem, and then seeming to recollect they were shed *before* the severing operation, changed his figure and styled it—the dew—the nectar of the gods, the ambrosial fount trickling down the sides of Helicon, and settling on the fairest and most lovely things of earth. To put a stop to his namby-pamby, she curtly informed him that *she* had always considered it no more than a spontaneous deposition of moisture ; and then to enlighten his dense ignorance a little, she mentioned the experiments that had been made to ascertain whether it was produced by the vapor descending from the atmosphere or by vapors arising from the earth ; after which she pointed out the distinction between dew and fog, and again between these and mist ; that the first was condensed from the atmosphere, and settled on bodies, and the second was exhaled from the earth and rose into the atmosphere, and the third descended in minute particles from the clouds. Both Christine and her mother laughed, and Jerome looked confused. May be she was too abrupt in so summarily dismissing his pretty conceits ; but—diamond sparkles, pearl drops, nectar of the gods, ambrosial founts trickling down the sides of Helicon—it was high time somebody

nipped such folly in the bud. But she was sorry she was the one called upon to do it; she would rather it was most any one else. After they were gone she felt heartily ashamed of the asperity of her voice and manner; but some way, she always experienced a disagreeable sensation from their calls. With the Bryans' she felt more at ease; her heart opened to them; their presence was always a comfort, they could not come too often; indeed they did not come often enough. In the dreary winter, with its great snow drifts blocking up the highways, obliging people to take to the fields and form temporary roads through them, her home at times seemed lonesome and forsaken. Florence had sunk into greater apathy than ever; all the care of the house came on her, she was totally without society except her father, and, strange to say, he failed to take his old interest in her remarks, sometimes he even did not hear them, and again, answered her at random. Her heart was heavy enough, she hardly knew what to do; she tried to write her troubles to Leo, and burned letter after letter. Some were of a nature to excite his deepest anxiety, and were therefore on no account to be sent; it was bad enough that she was depressed, no use of depressing him, too, and harrowing his feelings about what couldn't be helped; others were entirely too morbid in their

tone, and deserved in consequence to be destroyed. Above all things, she hated to see people petting their miseries, hugging them to their hearts and making much of them, and those letters showed that that was what she was doing, and she was *not* doing it, and why should she so cruelly misrepresent herself? No, she would write hopefully and bravely to him when she wrote at all. It was her duty ; and duty might be a severe mistress, but obeying her she would save both herself and brother a great deal of unnecessary sorrow ; for she found that by noting down every disagreeable feeling, instead of lessening it, she increased it ten-fold. With this resolution she said her prayers more devoutly than ever, and tried to be as cheerful as she could. She made talk at every meal, and managed to keep up an incessant chatter about one thing and another, ~~she~~ hardly knew what. Her father would some times interrupt a painful train of thought to look at her, lay his hand softly on her head, and call her his blessing, the sunshine of his old heart, the light and comfort of their home.

“But, father,” she said to him one day, after her tongue had run on unheeded for some time, “you only think me a child, with no dignity or self-respect. You don’t mind what I am saying ; you don’t think it worth your while.”

Her father answered : “Clara dear, I do listen to

you. Your voice is like music in my ears ; if I do not all the time heed the words, be not offended ; my thoughts are troubled, and here in body I am away in mind. You bear up nobly, my dear child, and set an example the most dignified might copy.'

"But I am childish, father, and you feel it, and so do I. You do not tell me your trouble, you think me too frivolous to understand it." Tears sprung to her large, earnest eyes and rolled down over her cheeks. She hastily turned her head to hide them. Her father took her hand and tenderly pressed it.

"My darling," he warmly exclaimed, "I do not think you frivolous at all. The good God has given you a kind heart and a strong brain, and you show it in the faithful performance of your duty and in the persistent cheerfulness you maintain, I do not wish to excite your vanity in saying this ; you have received these gifts from God, and you must be grateful to Him for His favors, and humble lest you should not use them to the best purpose. Success in the past is no guarantee of success in the future ; you must always be fearful and careful ; but I have told you all this before, and you will weary, dear child, with the repetition of it."

"No, father, no ; a good thing cannot be too

often repeated, or too often listened to. But why will you not tell me what troubles you and Florence of late. You have grown grave and silent, she sterner and more abstracted than ever. What is the matter? Tell me, father, remember I am no longer a child; I am a woman in years, and I have understanding to sympathize with you, and maybe I could do even more."

Mr. Kent looked at her, puzzled and pained. After an embarrassing silence, he replied: "My dearest child, you have had much to try you, and you have, thanks be to God, bore up bravely through it, bear up through this too. What troubles your sister and me cannot now be told you. But my withholding it from you is not because I doubt your excellent judgment and discretion, but because——" he paused, unable to proceed, and seeing a deathly pallor spread over his face, Clara generously finished the sentence for him.

"But because you think it's no use to trouble me with it?"

"Yes, my child," he answered, relieved.

"And because," she added, "it would pain you too much to go over it?"

"Yes, Clara, yes; painful indeed would it be."

"Then say no more about it, father, say no more about it. I will work in the dark, and wait and hope on." She left the room with a bright

look on her face but a heavy feeling at her heart. "What can it be?" she asked herself, "that he cannot even tell me. Oh what can it be?" A tremor passed over her lip, and a feeling to sit and brood over her father's words took possession of her. An hour passed, the clock on the kitchen mantelpiece struck, she started up.

"This will never do," she exclaimed, "I must be stirring." She went about the preparation of dinner, thinking all the time what the new trouble could be. The house was so still, such a hushed air presided over every room that it seemed to her, passing backward and forward from the dining-room to the kitchen, that she was the only living occupant in it. Her light steps, the little noise she now and then made around the stove, putting in a stick, removing a lid or opening the oven door, grated on her ear. The clock ticked painfully loud, the tea-kettle kept up a discordant murmur, and later, when she set the table, the jingling of the spoons and forks annoyed her. She softly laid them on a couple of folded napkins and glanced nervously out of the window. To her infinite relief she saw Annie Bryan coming up the shoveled path. She flew to the door to meet her. "I am so glad, so very glad to see you," she exclaimed, warmly shaking her hand, and pressing her cheek, "Come in, come in, you are just in

time." She set her a chair, and with fluttering fingers took her things.

"You look as if you had been crying," said Annie, as she returned from laying away her cloak and bonnet.

"Oh that is nothing," she answered, "only being over the fire. You are all well?"

"Yes, thank you, all but Kittie."

"What is the matter with her?"

"A sore throat. But for that she would have come with me. Mother said she knew you would be lonely, and so I came down without her, and came early. Father was going to Livy, and I got a chance to ride to the turn off up by Gipsons."

"I am glad you came early. I was lonely. You don't know, Annie, how lonely."

"You and your father and sister are well?"

"Yes."

"And Leo and the children, have you lately heard from them?"

"Last week I got a letter from Leo, and yesterday Florence got one from the boys."

"They were well?"

"Yes, and desired to be kindly remembered to your family, Leo writes that he had a visit from your brothers during the holidays."

"Yes, George and Henry wrote to us about it. When you answer his letter tell him we are grateful

for his kind remembrance, and don't forget to tell the dear children the same."

"I will not. Did you say your father would call for you on his return from Livy?"

"No, I believe I did not say it; but he is going to call for me when he comes back."

"I am glad to hear it, for I have a request to make."

"May I hear it?"

"Certainly. It is to let you stay a week with me."

"I don't know, Miss Kent, about that."

"Call me Clara, not Miss Kent if you please. It's enough for strangers to Miss me; I want my friends—I have not so many—to call me by my home name, the name blessed in baptism, I love it the best. And now as to your father, if he grants my request, I hope you will have no objection."

"No, I certainly will not. I would like dearly to stay with you, but I don't know about mother. I am afraid she would think it strange."

"Why should she, when I am so anxious about it?"

"I don't know, Clara," Annie timidly answered, "but you know there is such a thing as being bold and intrusive."

"And she would think me bold and intrusive in asking your presence here?" Clara knew well where the warm-hearted and affectionate Bryans would

fancy the boldness and intrusion came in, but she chose to put that construction on Annie's words. Annie's face flushed as she hastily answered, "No, no, Clara ; but—but—you know—"

"Yes, I know all about it. But I want you ; if I didn't I wouldn't ask you. I get terribly lonesome at times. You'll stay."

"Yes, Clara, I will."

"God bless you," she kissed her and burst into tears. "Oh I was so lonely when I saw you. It seemed as if our dear Lord sent you to me."

"Your sister, Clara, stays too closely in her room. She should leave it part of the time and bear you company in the sitting-room ; then you wouldn't get so lonely."

"That is true, but Florence don't and can't see it. I sometimes get real provoked at her ; but maybe if I had gone through as much as she has, I would be just as abstracted. By and by I hope she will rouse up, and then things will be pleasant-
or for us all."

"Does she seem any like it?"

"Like rousing up?"

"Yes."

"No, Annie," she lowered her voice to a confidential tone. "I don't know what it means, but she is graver and sterner than ever."

"Is it possible ? Oh I am so sorry to hear it."

"Hush! not another word, father is coming." She stepped to the door, opened it, and Mr. Kent came in. A pleased, surprised expression lightened his countenance when he saw Annie. In his grave, cordial way, he extended his hand to her.

"I am glad," he said, "to see you here, Annie. My dear child will have a pleasant afternoon."

"Several of them, father. Annie is going to stay a week with me."

"Indeed. This is truly a great favor." With a loving, graceful movement, Clara assisted her father in removing his overcoat; then taking it and his hat, was stepping to the hall with them when he called her back.

"Lay them here on a chair, my child; I am going out again after dinner."

She placed them on a chair near the stove, and hastily proceeded to give a few finishing touches to the dinner. It was soon smoking on the table; everything in readiness, she called Mrs. Spafford. Annie startled as she made her appearance. It was as if a corpse, moving its rigid limbs, had suddenly confronted her. A pallor crept over her face, and her eye looked wild and troubled. She mechanically took the cold hand extended towards her, and a chill thrilled her whole frame. She tried to speak but the words rose no higher than her throat. With an effort she turned her head

away, and encountered Mr. Kent's gaze rivetted mournfully upon her. Was it possible! tears were standing in the depths of his mild eyes.

"My children," he calmly said, breaking the painful silence that had fallen on the group, "we will be seated."

As he blessed himself and said grace aloud, the tones of his full rich voice trembled. As before at the table, Annie could think of nothing to say, and unlike the other occasions of her embarrassment, Mr. Kent did not come to her assistance. After a few desultory remarks, he sunk into a reverie, painful as quiet, to judge from the contracted brow and the saddened expression of his now tearless eyes. Florence, as usual, was silent, but Clara spoke, and as might be expected, her subject was books. Fortunately for Annie they were not of a scientific nature, only biographical. It was St. Bernard's Life and Times. She dwelt rapturously on the happiness of the pious Elizabeth and warlike Tecelin having such holy and gifted children, turned to the crusade St. Bernard preached, and his labors and miracles during it, his noble defence of the Jews in Germany, and the torrent of indignation he poured out against the savage and remorseless Rodolph. She then, with childish grace and innocence, repeated the chronicle of Joshua Ben-Meir, relating the dire and terrible woes of

his people, and expressing the warmest gratitude to the wise and merciful Bernard. Her cheeks glowed and her tongue grew eloquent in enlarging on her topic. Annie listened, pleased and edified. Mrs. Spafford retired to her room and Mr. Kent went to the village. Clara and Annie cleared away the dinner and tidied the sitting-room and kitchen. It was Clara's habit, unless interrupted by callers, to write a couple of hours every afternoon. Annie knew this, and begged her not to let her presence hinder her.

"Show me your portfolio," she said, "and while I am amusing myself with the drawings you can be writing."

"I suppose," returned Clara, trying not to assume any superiority over her visitor, "that you often wonder what I am writing?"

"Well yes, we—that is Kittie and I—have thought of it a little."

"You have not mentioned it to any one?"

"No, as you requested us to say nothing about it, we have not."

"That is right," Clara complacently rejoined, "I wish no one but you and Kittie to know anything of it. By and by, I have an idea, somebody will be a little surprised."

"Who?" Annie innocently asked.

Clara did not give a direct answer ; she only remarked :

“Jerome Hascall has quite a turn for books, I believe.”

“Jerome Hascall ! I had a different opinion of him. I thought he cared precious little about them.”

“Indeed ! why he goes off into raptures about them to me. And then—but I’ve no patience with him.”

“You don’t like him ?”

“I don’t like to see one so romantic and sentimental as he is.”

Annie was astonished. Jerome Hascall romantic and sentimental ! That was something new to her. Except that he had more life about him, she thought him almost as prosaic as his father. Clara was certainly laboring under a delusion. She considered her clear-sighted, how come she to be so mistaken ? This was a puzzle she could not solve ; she looked up inquiringly into Clara’s earnest and truthful eyes ; but the questions that surged to her lips were swept back by Clara suddenly changing the conversation.

“I am worried,” she said, “about Florence. Don’t you think she looks feebler than when you last saw her ?”

"Remember, Clara, I have never seen her otherwise than feeble and delicate."

"I know, I know; but to me she looks thinner than she did."

"Does she complain any?"

"No, if she did I would not be at such a loss what to do. A few days ago I proposed sending for a doctor, but she peremptorily forbid it, and denied she was sick. I went to father about it, and he begged me to pray for her more fervently than ever, for she was in sore distress. I forthwith commenced a Novena to Our Blessed Lady for her, and say it every morning before leaving my room."

"But did your father tell you what the sore distress was?"

"No, and he looked so wretched I had not the heart to ask him. This morning, however, I begged him to let me know it, and he said he could not, that it would be too painful for him to go over it. Oh, Annie, you don't know how wild and fearful I feel." Tears filled her eyes, and rolled unheeded over her cheeks.

"How long since you noticed this change in your sister?"

"Four or five weeks ago. Father came home one day from the village, and in assisting him to remove his overcoat, I noticed a letter in his breast pocket. Taking it out, he went to the study and

bade me send Florence to him. Going up to her room, I found her reading; laying down her book she at once rose, and meeting me at the door, looked at me and pleasantly said: 'I have been hunting up that passage in Chateaubriand you were speaking of; it is in the chapter on Ruins of two Kinds, page 468.' I thanked her, and she passed on. Oh, how agreeable and companionable she was getting to be, and how happy I was. But it was not to last. It was not to last," she sorrowfully repeated. "I took up," she resumed, after a little pause, the book and returned to the sitting-room. I had not been there long before I heard father's voice in the study, and I thought there was a grieved, shocked tone in it; soon I heard Florence's, loud, louder than I ever before heard it, and there was no mistaking the sharp angry ring in it. I was amazed, and wondered what it meant. Presently came a sound as of a body falling heavily, and the next instant father threw open the door and called me, Florence had fainted. It was some time before we succeeded in restoring her to consciousness. As soon as she revived she sat up on the sofa, where we had laid her, and requested me to leave the room; I did so, and she and father had a long conference together. When they came out, Florence was stern, frozen, unapproachable—all the little cordiality she had

shown me was gone—father was kind, as he always is, but grave and silent. I racked my brain to find out what it meant. I began to fear Leo or the boys were sick, and then wondered, if they were, why they kept it from me—why they didn't tell me. I asked father, and he assured me they were well. Still not satisfied I wrote to them, and their answers came buoyant, hopeful and happy."

"Did you mention the cause of your uneasiness?"

"No, I could not bring myself to do it, I merely told them my eyes were aching for a letter from them; and so they were, but not in the sense in which they evidently took it. Had they known how wretched I felt, it would have overshadowed them with gloom. Thank God! I saved them a few heart-pangs. Once or twice since then, you and Kittie have been to see me, but I have said nothing of it to you, for I was in hopes, as Leo and the boys were well, Florence's strangeness would wear off and father would regain his usual serenity. Instead of that, for the past week Florence has been sterner and more abstracted than ever, and father graver and more silent. Every morning he is in the study writing, then he goes to the village, and after dinner he goes there again. Andrew tells me he never leaves the village till the evening mail comes in. Several times he has brought home letters; I know when they come, for Florence is

always sent for to the study. Our evening conversation and reading are still continued, but they don't seem what they once were. Father tries to shake off his gloom and wake up to something like interest; but I generally find myself the only speaker—he listening and agreeing to what I say, and now and then mildly dissenting. The reading, I notice, seems to comfort him, so I generally shorten my remarks as much as I can and open the blessed Faber's All for Jesus, or the dear Garden of Roses and Valley of Lilies. These works soothe him more than any other; I don't know what I should do without them. I have read them over and over, this winter, and still their blessed influence is not weakened or lessened. Florence sometimes wakes up from her apathy to listen to them. But, Annie, how is it going to end? What does it all mean? I have asked myself this question time and again, and I have rubbed my eyes and tried to see, to look ahead of me, and I can't. All is void and dark before me."

Annie shuddered, and bowing her head on her hands, tears trickled through her fingers. She thought of the words her father once dropped in her hearing, that a still greater sorrow waited in the way for the pious, saintly Felix Kent; she remembered how pale his swarthy face grew, how he started up and paced the floor, with clasped hands

and lowered head. She stifled a rising groan, and looked up into the innocent beaming face before her.

“You pity and sympathize with me?” said Clara.

“Yes I do, and I only wish I could do something to help you.”

“You can. You can pray for me and for father and Florence.”

“And I will. My poor prayers shall be freely offered up for you.”

“And you will stay with me a week?”

“Two, three if you want me.”

“I am glad to hear that, for here comes your father.”

Mr. Bryan came in; he seemed at first a little surprised that Annie was not to go back with him, but readily acquiesced in her staying awhile with Clara. Andrew was to ride home with him and bring back whatever Annie would want. Her mother would know what to send her, or if she did not, Annie might write a line. No line was written, but a well-filled satchel was sent back by Andrew, and in it Annie found all she needed.

That evening, for the first time, she joined the family in their “study” conversation, as Clara called it. Mr. Kent made a few observations on the wholesome advice Thomas à-Kempis gives about bearing our cross, and then lapsed into silence. Mrs. Spafford was seated near Clara, but, looking

at them, it seemed as if an infinite distance was between them. Clara was thrilling with life and health, she pale and shadowy as the occupant of a tomb ; she made not the slightest effort to help along the conversation, and Clara, as she had told Annie, had all the talking to do ; after came the reading from the Valley of Lilies, the XV. and XVI. chapters. The last one Clara read over twice in a very impressive manner, pausing now and then to glance at her father and sister where some of the blessed words seemed peculiarly applicable to them ; then came the night prayers, and Annie was shown her room. A wakefulness was over her ; extinguishing her lamp she stepped to the window and drew aside the muslin curtain. The night was still and clear, not a cloud flecked the amber sky ; the full moon, regally grand, looked down with a passionless face on the hushed earth ; below lay the peaceful village, beyond it stretched the white fields, and farther on rose the old hills, forest-crowned and sombre. Drawing the heavy shawl she had thrown over her shoulders on leaving the library, more closely round her, she sank down on the carpet, and rested her elbows on the window-sill. Her father's darkened past, and Felix Kent's saving kindness and guardian gentleness came up before her. Most keenly did she feel the great sorrow that had fallen upon him, and the awful and

unmentionable dread that pressed so heavily upon his declining years. More and more silvered was his hair, more bowed and contracted his noble form. Her room opened into Clara's, and Clara's into Mrs. Spafford's; for companionship the door of each had been swung back. An hour passed. She heard Clara's deep, quiet breathing, and she knew she slept. A groan fell on her ear; it was from Mrs. Spafford's room; she started up; her first impulse was to waken Clara, for she thought her sister was ill. But as she reached the door and glanced into the farther apartment, she saw Mrs. Spafford on her knees before her bed. She paused and stood as if spell-bound, unable to move or tear her gaze from that white, kneeling figure. Her head was thrown back, the eyes upraised, the hands clasped and uplifted; the lips moved and words came from them.

“Let the prayer of a heavy-laden sinner ascend in Thy sight. Hear me, O my Father, hear me! blackness is before me and the desolation of years settles upon me. Oh, my children, my children! and my broken-hearted father! save them, save them the pain and ignominy, and let the grave cover me from their sight.” Sobs choked her further utterance, and with a chill, sick feeling creeping over her, Annie tottered to her bed, undressed and

lay down. All night the prayer of that desolate woman wrung in her ears.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE next morning, Mrs. Spafford appeared at the breakfast table, calm as usual, and as silent. Mr. Kent said something about going to Livy; he would go directly after the meal and be back by dinner time; was there anything Clara wanted to send for? She answered in the negative, and ventured to ask what he was going for. She got the one comprehensive and oracular word "business," as a reply. Of course she was not much enlightened as to the object of his ride to Livy. On rising from the table, Mrs. Spafford looked at Clara and seemed about moving to the kitchen, but paused at the door, and leaned against the door case. Clara addressed her in a pleasant, genial manner; she smiled a sad, vacant smile, and turned and walked into the study; she staid there but a few moments, came out and ascended to her room. Mr. Kent left the study at the same time, and Andrew bringing round the tear, he made ready for Livy. That afternoon, as the girls were seated at their sewing, Clara said, watching her father go into the study, where Mrs. Spafford awaited him:

"Father and Florence cannot take me into their councils."

"Why can't they, Clara?"

"I don't know, but I suppose it's because they cannot get it out of their heads that I am only a child. They forget I am nineteen."

"Nineteen!" repeated Annie, "why, that's not young."

"No, indeed, it's old. I feel it every day of my life. One illusion after another has faded away, and now I see things as they are, not as the fancies of childhood painted them. When I was young, life was all a fairy vision."

"And what is it now?"

"A brambly path, leading through defiles and over rough, precipitous ways, to a rest and haven at last. Through the dim vistas of the future I catch a glimpse of a heavenly peace, a soul-resting calm; and this is no mocking dream, no fallacious vision. It is born of faith in the Divine promise and love of the Father who created us in His image, animated us with His spirit, and redeemed us with the precious blood of His Son."

"And this hope is with you a light all the time?"

"It is with me, and should be a light all the time, but sometimes I forget it. Sometimes, Annie, when I am talking with father, and trying, and I know, succeeding in looking joyous and bright, a

heaviness is over me and a mocking, bitter feeling echoes back my laughter with an inward cry of pain. I dare not speak of it to father; I cannot mention it to Leo, I almost doubt the propriety of referring to it to you."

"Is it because you think I cannot sympathize with you?"

"No, Annie, no; but I recoil whenever I attempt to spread it out in words."

"But sometimes, Clara, it lessens one's sorrows to lay them before a discreet, sympathizing friend. You remember the old proverb, that hidden grief eats away the heart."

"Yes, I know." She impatiently pushed the thick hair from her forehead, and looked anxiously, searchingly into Annie's face.

"I have wanted a hundred times," she said, "to tell you what troubles me, but I have never had the courage. You think me strong, I know you do; but I sometimes feel I am miserably weak—that is, weak in some things, in others strong," she added, with a conscientious desire to adhere strictly to the truth.

"And what do you think you are weak in?"

"I can't be as patient as I want to be. I can't look over my sorrows, and climb right above them. On the contrary, they pile above me and weigh me down."

“And do you suppose your suffering makes you displeasing to our dear Lord?”

“I believe undue depression under suffering does, and therefore I have tried my best to be cheerful, but it has been terrible hard work; so hard that I feel I must not dwell too much on my trouble or it will get the perfect mastery of me.”

“But you don’t think it wrong to speak of it to a discreet, sympathizing friend?”

A rap was heard at the kitchen door, Clara stepped to it; it was Andrew with a basket of ironed clothes his wife had sent up. She took the basket, gave him a kind word, sent another to his wife and went up stairs to lay the clothes away. Returning soon, she seated herself and said:

“Now I will answer your question. No, I cannot say it is wrong, or that I think it wrong, for one of the spiritual works of mercy is to comfort the afflicted, and unless we knew one was afflicted we would not be able to do it. But I don’t suffer as I once thought I would. You don’t know what a St. Lawrence I once fancied I could be. In the old time, when reading such works as the Way of the Cross, the Cross in its true light, and others showing the utility of suffering, I used to think there was nothing I would not willingly, nay, cheerfully endure—endure, but that is not the right word, welcome is a more appropriate one to use.

Seneca wrote a treatise on poverty on a gold table and in the midst of the most serene home-happiness, without a grief or care in the world, I could have been most blissfully wretched."

Annie smiled. "But, Clara," she said, "without in the least wishing to flatter you, I will say that we all think you have bravely borne the change in your father's circumstances, and betake yourself with great fortitude to the labor it involves."

"Oh, as to the labor, I am strong and healthy, and do not mind it. Sometimes, 'tis true, I miss some of the things of our old home, but that is nothing, scarcely a pin prick, but what weighs like a stone on my heart is the unholy way Florence grieves. Her's, Annie, are deep sorrows, and not of yesterday or the day before, but of years standing. Homer Spafford, though my brother-in-law, I will say it, was a hard, cruel man, and led her a bitter life."

"So I have heard father say. And do you know, Clara, he thinks it the strangest thing in the world that she should so mourn for him."

"So do I, Annie, I have often wondered at it."

"Did you ever hear whether he got more considerate to her towards the last or not. For if he did, forgetting his old hardness, she might only remember his later kindness."

"No, he never did. From what I can learn she

was more and more dissatisfied with him, and more unhappy towards the last than ever before." Her elbow rested on the table, her open palm supported her head. A pallor crept over her beautiful and wistful face ; once she opened her lips as if to speak and then closed them. Whatever she was going to say, she thought better of it and repressed it. With one of her quick and sudden movements she swept the bits of cloth scattered over the table into her little silk apron, and commenced assorting and rolling them up. Her head was bent over her work, and Annie noticed tears on the long lashes. She thought of the night before, the narrow room up stairs, the obscurity that veiled it, the white-robed, ghostly-looking woman there weeping and praying, the terrible gloom that hung over her, and the mystery it involved. What did it mean? How was it going to end? Clara said she had asked herself that question time and again, and yet could find no answer to it. Neither could Annie, though with her usual care and thought she had sounded all its cavernous depths. She pitied Mrs. Spafford, pitied her from the bottom of her heart, and yet she could not feel easy in her presence. She did not recoil from her with a shuddering dread, as Kittie declared she did, but she froze like herself into a distant reserve. Free and unembarrassed before Clara and her father, she grew

chill and constrained before her. She knew of her blighted life, and ached to draw her from its painful memories; she wanted to sit down beside her, show her by her sympathizing manner how much she felt for her, and melting her cold reserve, draw her into pleasant, genial conversation. She was sure it would do her good, but she could not do it. Everytime she attempted it she shrank back appalled at her own temerity. It was not because Mrs. Spafford repulsed her attempts with rudeness; she did not. She only looked at her vacantly, smiled sadly upon her, and listened without seeming to hear a word she said. One day that she and Kittie called to see them she, trying to overcome her timidity, seated herself beside her, and taking her cold hand in her warm grasp, began to tell her of a pleasant little incident happening at the dear Sisters, the crowning of one of the children at the May festival, and then the morning readings and the devotions offered to our Blessed Lady during that beautiful month, especially dedicated to her. But the words, so ready when addressing Clara, rushed back, and after a few faltering, stumbling sentences, she grew silent. Mrs. Spafford removed her hand from hers, and rising with a heart-broken gentleness, remarked:

“My dear child, I must go to my room, you will excuse me. You have pleasant memories, cherish

them ; mine are of a different kind, and I cannot turn them out. I must listen to them, and they ring a wearying cry in my ear." She stooped, picked up her handkerchief, which had fallen to the carpet, and left the room. The clock struck, rousing her from her reverie ; it roused Clara also. She started up.

"It's time to get tea," she said ; "I must go." She left the sitting-room, and repaired to the kitchen. Annie did not follow her ; she knew by her countenance that she would rather be alone.

The third and fourth day of her visit wore away. A brooding sorrow hung over the household ; Clara tried to be cheerful and entertain her friend ; and if she did not succeed very well in her attempts to make the time pass lightly and pleasantly, she at least succeeded in impressing upon her the excellence of her temper and the thorough order and regularity of her domestic arrangements. There was a time and a place for every thing, and every thing was kept or done in its time and place. This was the secret with her many duties, of her still being able to pursue her studies and writing. But for the present they were laid aside ; while Annie was with her she felt she ought not to think of them. Every afternoon, their morning's work done, their dark calicoes were laid aside, and in their crimson merinos, spotless linen collars and

greatly agitated, that it was with difficulty he spoke, "I would like you to get the tea a little earlier than usual, now, as quick as you can."

"But, father"—she seized his hand—"tell me, I beg you, what this all means—the gentlemen in the study, Florence's trunk brought down, and now the earlier tea."

"We are going away for a while, Florence and I."

"Where?" Her countenance grew deadly pale as she put the question.

"West. We are going west. Ask me no more." There was an authority and severity in his voice she never before heard.

"We will be away a week, a fortnight, perhaps longer," he said after a slight pause, "Andrew and his wife will sleep in the house during our absence, and Annie," he turned to her, "I know you will not leave my poor Clara till we get back." As his tones had been severe to Clara they were now almost austere to her visitor. It seemed more like an order he was giving than uttering a wish, or asking a favor. Annie's face flushed, but with a readiness she answered :

"Of course, Mr. Kent, I or Kittie will stay with her. We will not leave her alone. And—" she stepped up to him and took his hand—"however this may end, remember Michael Bryan and his family can never, never forget your kindness to

them. May God bless you and keep you from harm." She dashed away the tears that had gathered in her eyes, and left the room to help Clara with the meal. It was soon ready, and Mr. Kent, Mrs. Spafford and the gentlemen were called from the study. One was an elderly man with a grave, thoughtful and rather severe countenance. He hardly glanced at the girls as they were introduced to him by Mr. Kent, but at once seated himself at the table. The other was perhaps a little past middle age, and had a sharp, cool, penetrating eye. He nodded graciously to Annie and Clara, and calmly seated himself beside his friend. Seeing Clara's agitation was such that she could hardly attend to her duty as hostess, he proceeded with great ease to do the honors of the table himself; he passed the bread, butter, cheese and dried beef round to each one, and with a graceful smile placed the dish of marmalade before Annie to be portioned out on the tiny plates. Clara with trembling fingers poured out the tea; he pleasantly took it from her hand and reached the sugar bowl and cream ewer to every one. He declared tea a very indifferent beverage without its proper seasoning. Had it not been for him it would have been a silent meal, but he managed by an occasional remark thrown in by the elder gentleman to Mr. Kent, to keep up quite a show of conversation. One thing,

however, was noticeable—his business there, the sudden journey or the cause of it, were not in the most remote manner referred to. The weather, the roads, the political state of the country formed the subject he smilingly dwelt upon. Three or four observations were directed to Annie and Clara, but their distress and agitation were so great they could not respond to them, and in seemingly the best of spirits he responded to them, and continued his remarks as if every one around the table was, like himself, perfectly at ease. The meal over he stepped into the hall and got his own and the other gentleman's overcoat, their hats, gloves and fur collars. Clara helped her father to put on his overcoat, got his warm over-shoes and heavy traveling shawl, while Annie assisted Mrs. Spafford to wrap. Nothing was forgotten by the two girls, and quick and ready were their steps round the house and through the rooms to gather up what they deemed necessary for the comfort of the father and daughter going away. In a low, hurried voice, Clara told Annie where the various articles were, and speedily were they brought forth. The trunk was handed into the sleigh, Andrew held the lines, all ready to start. Clara kissed her father and sister, and wishing them all prosperity, and begging them soon to write, walked dry-eyed back to the sitting room. She looked out of the window

and watched their retreating forms till a turn in the road hid them from her sight ; then she crossed her arms on the low mantel-piece, bowed her head upon them and wept as if her heart would break. Annie tried to comfort her, but her kind, soothing words fell on unheeding ears. Feeling the inward storm must have vent, she left her and quietly removed the tea things, cleared away the dishes and washed them, and tidied and swept the room. As she came in from the kitchen, after hanging up the broom and duster, she perceived Clara's wild sobbing was over, and that her eyes turned mournfully towards her.

"Father will not be with us to hear our reading to-night," was her first tearful remark.

"No, but he will soon come back," was the cheering reply.

"Oh, I hope so, I hope so. If I only knew where they were going and for what, and why Florence had to go, too."

Annie shuddered. If she only knew !

"When," Clara asked, "did Andrew say his wife would be here?"

"By early candle-light."

"Oh, how lonely it looks," sobbed Clara, "how desolate and empty the house."

Annie drew up a chair for Clara and a stool for herself.

"Sit down," she quietly said. Clara obeyed her, and seating herself on the stool she threw her arm protectingly around her. An hour passed, neither of the girls spoke, silence reigned in the house.

"Let us pray," Clara whispered. They both sank on their knees. Annie took out her rosary and with the silver crucifix before them, with earnest trembling voices the beautiful and sublime Thirty-Day Prayer was offered up. As they rose from their knees, the hoarse blustering wind swept round the house. Looking out they saw the light snow sifted through the air.

"God help them," said Clara, "it will be a wild stormy night, and poor father and Florence will be out in it."

"But they are in Livy by this time. And you know it's warm and comfortable in the cars."

"Yes, I know," she drearily answered.

To make talk, Annie asked, "Did you notice the names of the gentlemen?"

"No, I did not," she absently replied.

"I think," said Annie, "that the younger one was Egan. I noticed the name, because it is familiar to me. I knew a young lady in school of the same name. Her father was a celebrated lawyer in Rochester."

"And he lives in Rochester," rejoined Clara. "I heard him speak of it."

"And the elder gentleman?"

"I don't know, Annie, but I think he spoke of his home as being in the west."

"Yes, so he did, Clara. He said he would be home in, I think, forty-eight hours."

"But the wind, Aunie; Oh, how it roars, and how blindingly the snow is whirled about. Poor, poor father and Florence." She covered her face with her hands, and again her slight form was convulsed with sobs. The night came down quick, and the storm increased in violence. They began to fear the safe return of Andrew, when, above the shrieking blast of the wind, they heard his loud rap at the kitchen door. Annie seized the lamp and together the girls went to admit him and his wife. He had "put up" the horses and eaten his supper; he was very cold on reaching home, but his meal had warmed him, and now he was all right. This Mrs. Halloran, in a good-natured, fluttered way, informed them, as they assisted her in removing and shaking off the snow from her wrappings.

"It was so kind in you to come, too," Annie said. "The night is so wild I hardly expected you."

"Oh, I knew you two would be lonely all by yourselves, so I just told Andrew I would put the

children to bed, see to the fire, wrap up well and come. And that's the way I am here."

"And I am so glad ; for we were lonely, Mrs. Halloran." Clara conducted them to the sitting-room. "And father and Florence," she said, unable to say more.

"I saw them in the cars, Miss," Andrew answered, "and I wrapped the shawls you gave me warm around them, and I placed the pillow for your sister to lean against just as you ordered me. They were very comfortable, and are a good lift on their journey by this time, for the train started before I left the village. Your father bade me tell you to keep your heart up and he would soon write you."

"Pray God he may," she fervently rejoined. "Oh, if I only knew where they are going," she thought, "if I only knew."

Annie and Clara crowded round Mr. and Mrs. Halloran, and in their presence felt not the loneliness press so heavily upon them ; but not much was said ; none felt in the mood for words. The hour for evening devotions came slowly round, and prayers were said, and unbroken silence filled the house, and the storm raged more and more fiercely, and more intense grew the cold, and darker and wilder grew the night.

"And father and Florence are out in it ! God save them, God keep them," was the sobbing cry

of Clara, as, exhausted, she at last sank into a troubled sleep.

CHAPTER IX.

THE next day wore 'gloomily away. The storm never abated; drifts of snow, mountain high, were piled up in the front yard, the windows were white with frost, the warm fire had no power over them, the wind shrieked and howled around the house. The two girls tried to keep themselves busy, but the lonely breakfast despatched and the morning's work done, they sank down listlessly to their sewing; they did not talk much, for whatever subject was brought forward it wandered at once to the absent father and sister and the mystery hanging over their sudden journey, and the cause of it weighed too fearfully on Annie and too depressingly on Clara to be borne; so they were silent, and only now and then paused in their sewing and looked wistfully into each other's faces. The way to Andrew's house was clear, if approached through the back yard of Mr. Kent's residence, and early in the morning he and his wife had left them, and were not to return till evening. They did not expect to see a living soul but themselves that day, for no one passed the house, and the road through

the fields, which by a sudden turn wound through the deep front yard, was trackless as the driven waste ; but late in the afternoon they were startled by a loud rap at the sitting room door. They looked wildly at each other, and each grew a shade paler.

"We are getting foolish," exclaimed Clara, promptly rising, "this will never do." But, although her voice took a turn of unflinching bravery, she glanced warily out of the window before going to the door. The frosted state of the panes prevented her seeing who it was, and with trembling hand she opened the door. Her fears were at once allayed ; it was Mr. Cleary, Mr. Bryan's nephew.

"As Annie's week is up to-day, Miss Kent, we thought she might wonder at our not coming for her. So I came to assure her that we are well, and that it was the storm that hindered her father sending the team for her, and to see how you all are."

He shook the snow off his coat and cap, closed the door, which he had for a moment left open, wiped his feet on the mat, and tried also to get the great clumps of hardened snow off them, but did not succeed, and then took the chair that Clara offered him, and drew it still nearer the stove.

"It is very cold out," Annie said.

"Yes," he replied, rubbing his hands and holding them out to the glowing warmth; "a cold, blustering day. The snow has filled up the roads, and it would be impossible to get along with the team."

"What, the road through the fields?"

"Yes, the road through the fields; where the fences were thrown down the snow has all drifted up, so there'll be a pretty job when the storm is over to clear it away again."

"As for Annie going home to-day," said Clara, drawing up her chair opposite him on the other side of the stove, "we never once thought of it. Aside from the storm, Mr. Cleary, it would be impossible to spare her now," and then she told him of her father and sister's absence from home, and how Annie had promised to stay with her till their return.

"When do you expect them?" he asked. He wanted to ask where they had gone, but he did not dare to be too inquisitive. The asking when she expected them might look as referring to Annie's absence from home, and therefore would not appear bold or prying.

"I cannot say," she returned, "it is quite uncertain. But Annie must stay with me till they get back."

"Of course, Miss Kent, I don't think aunt or uncle will object in the least."

"Oh, I know they will not, Peter," Annie rejoined ; "I will write a few lines for you to take back to them." She rose to leave the room, and Clara instructed her where to find pen, ink and paper.

"How is Kittie's throat?" she asked, when Annie had left.

"Better, much better, thank you. If she does not take another cold with this sudden change, she will be all right in a few days."

"And then she too will come and stay with me."

"If you wish it, Miss Kent, I dare say she will."

"Well, I do wish it ; I wish it more than I can say. You will tell her so?"

"I will, Miss Kent."

"You found the way here somewhat rough?"

"Yes, I had no idea how bad it was till I passed the turn by Cranson's. There the wind seems to play from all quarters."

Annie came in and handed him her note. He put it in the side pocket of his inside coat and rose. To her invitation to stay longer, he answered :

"No, Annie, I must start as soon as I can. It's going to be a wild night, and I do not care to be out in it."

"Pray God you may get home safe, Mr. Cleary," remarked Clara, seeing him put on his cap, wrap

his comforter round his neck, and draw on his heavy-fringed mittens.

"Trusting in His mercy, I do not doubt it. But —" glancing down at his boots, "what a muss I have made on your carpet, Miss Kent."

"Oh, that's nothing. I am glad those great, hardened lumps of snow have melted from your boots. And now, good-bye; we will not detain you another minute."

Annie reached him her hand. "Good-bye, Peter, God bless you."

"The sight of his face," said Annie, as she closed the door after him, "has done me good."

"Yes, there is something kind and genial about him. I like your cousin, Annie; he looks good and true."

"And he is, Clara," Annie warmly responded, "he is just what he looks."

Leaving the two girls to discuss his merits, we will watch his return home. The snow had covered his tracks, the wind beat bitter cold in his face, frosting his hair and beard, but lowering his head, and minding his steps that each one should tell, he walked or rather waded through the deep snow with a firm, determined gait. No giving way, no sinking down, bewildered and dismayed. The light, feathery particles hit like needles in his face; they came down thick and fast, he could not see a

rod before him, and all the time the way grew more and more impassable. It was well he had not a long distance to go; for as the darkness rushed down, and with it a wilder roar of the wind, and a more stinging cold, and a blackness that seemed palpable, thick, suffocating, and a feeling of world-forsaking loneliness and desolation, even his stout heart might have yielded, and the next day, or the next, or when the storm had exhausted its fury and sunk to rest, his stiffened form might have been found in its snowy couch. Such things have been known in these Alpine storms. But the knowledge that the way was short—a mere nothing in other weather, and traversed hundreds and hundreds of times, buoyed him up. There was no landmark to steer by, for every landmark was swept away, and he knew there were devious turns in the old path through the fields, turns where stone walls could not be removed, where dangerous steeps had been shunned, and basin-like dells been kept clear of. No moon or star from above to guide him, for moon or star there was not; no beacon-light on earth; every light was quenched—only night, blackness, howling winds, driving snow and trackless and dangerous ways were around him. He thought of the warm and comfortable room he had left, of the warm and comfortable home he was making for, and crossing himself and

breathing a fervent prayer, he urged on. He knew the distance from one turn to another, which side, right or left, they took ; and without guide, or compass, or light to lead him on, by a heaven-born instinct he kept somewhere towards the old path. At last a light, or more correctly speaking, a lurid ball of fire appeared right before him, and he stumbled against something.

"Is it you, Peter ? Thank God you have come. I have been looking for you." It was Mr. Bryan, with a lantern ; he felt uneasy when night came, and his nephew had not returned. More than once he had gone to the door, and tried to pierce the darkness ; unable to see he had got his lantern and made his way to the large old apple-tree on the south side of the yard ; there was where the path went through his lands, and there he met him.

"You are nearly perished !"

"No, uncle, no ; but thank God I am home. It's been a tough job."

Mr. Bryan took his mittened hand and led him into the kitchen. "It's not so warm in here," he said, "the fire has almost died out and it's too warm in the sitting room for you now." Hearing their voices, Mrs. Bryan and Kittie came hastening in, but Mr. Bryan hustled them back to their quarters. "Away from here," he exclaimed, "you've no business here. Peter's supper is all spread for him,

and when he's warm enough he'll eat it. Away " He pushed them into the sitting-room and closed the door after them. Then he took off Peter's mittens and commenced chafing his hands, thinking all the time how foolish he had been to let him go. Since the darkness fell, he had been thinking the same with more self-reproving bitterness than now, when he was safe under shelter. The chores at the barn done, he had walked the house, and looked and listened and tortured himself with thinking of all the cases of found and frozen he had ever heard or read of for the last dozen years. They trooped through his mind, a white, ghostly band, each with a reproving finger coldly pointed to him. He was sorry he had spoken of its being the day for Annie's return ; she was too sensible to expect any one to go for her in such a storm, and doubtless was too well satisfied with her present place to want it. He was a miserable, restless fool, he knew he was. But now, thank God, the danger was past ; Peter was safe at home. He helped him off with his overcoat, and shook the snow from it and made him sit down, and handed him a warm cup of tea.

" Drink it," he said, " it will strengthen you to eat your supper." Peter drained the cup and handed it back to him. When he had sat for a little while, his uncle all the time watching him

with a troubled, restless countenance, he drew up to the table. Mr. Bryan lifted several covered dishes from the stove, poured out and seasoned another cup of tea, and put more wood in the stove.

"Now we'll soon have a rousing fire," he said, for the first time feeling a little more comfortable himself. "You found them all well?" he asked.

"Yes." That monosyllabic answer lifted a weight from his heart. He had been in strange worry about the Kents for the last day or so ; he hardly knew why: He started every little while at the peculiar expression of Mr. Kent's eyes and tone of his voice when speaking his wish to have Annie stay longer with his daughter, there was such an unnecessary earnestness, such a life and death intentness about him ; and that was not his way ; he was always calm and unmoved. And when he told him of course she should stay, what did it mean, his saying, "for Clara may need her, need her longer than that, say two, three weeks, Michael, or till"—and then make a long pause and so distressingly add—"till we are settled again." They were already settled, just settled, and what did the sudden stop and strange finishing off of his sentence mean ? What new trouble hung over Felix Kent ? or was it a new trouble or only a bursting forth of the old ? I have said that Michael Bryan was one that jumped at once to a conclusion,

and the present instance was not an exception. Mrs. Spafford had been most unhappily situated her husband, with his dark unbelief and black tyranny, had led her a most wretched life. Her father had helped and helped him, and after all he had basely forsaken her—her father in his anguish had as much as owned it to him—had left her broken in health and spirit, to struggle on alone in poverty and neglect. Kent had sent her and her children after him. They met; she learned how he had not only forsaken her, but beggared her father—beggared only for the thoughtful provision of the father-in-law by his second wife. Florence, so long patient, grew desperate—and then came news of his death. Florence returned with her children a changed woman, hard, cold, impassible. Some terrible mystery hung over this most singular change. What was it? What could it be? In terror he had put this question to himself, and his heart sickened as, with his usual promptness, he answered it. He dared not look ahead for Felix Kent. In the dim future he saw still greater sorrow, a horrible ignominy hanging over him. But though he looked not ahead, he kept a careful watch on the present. He eyed Mrs. Spafford, he noted the words that occasionally, during his frequent calls at her father's, fell from her lips; he questioned Mr. Kent as closely as he

lared; he talked over, with the girls, their visits there, to see if possible his first formed conclusion might not be wrong. He groaned in spirit when every thing went to confirm its correctness. When Peter had eaten his supper, and told him of Mr. Kent's and Mrs. Spafford's absence, and given him the note Annie had written, he tottered to his chair and sunk into it helpless as a little child.

"Are you ill, uncle?" Peter asked, seeing how pale and rigid his face grew.

"No," he huskily replied, "and Annie tells me they don't know where they have gone or when they will return."

"But Miss Kent said they would be back in two or three weeks."

"They," he sadly repeated, "they."

"Yes," Peter rejoined, "unless Mrs. Spafford got sick with the journey."

Mr. Bryan started up. "Did Clara say that, or did Mr. Kent leave word to that effect?" Large drops stood on his forehead, and his eye was almost fierce in its intensity of gaze.

"No, uncle," Peter soothingly replied, "she said nothing of the kind, Mr. Kent left no word to that effect; I only thought it myself from Mrs. Spafford's extremely feeble looks. I don't see how she came to go; what necessity there was at this time of the year, and in her state of health to drag her out."

Neither could Mr. Bryan ; and yet this is wrong. He did see a reason, a terrible one ; but he shut his eyes, and tried, in so doing, to shut out the sickening vision that reason called up. He rose and paced the floor ; when his nephew again spoke he did not hear him, but silent, walked on. After sitting a while he left him still walking, and repaired to the sitting-room. Mrs. Bryan was seated at the table, sewing. Kittie, in the large, well-padded rocking chair before the stove, was knitting ; her feet rested on a stool, which a sleek, handsome gray and white cat shared, and purred, happy and contented, while the storm raged and shrieked without.

“ Father,” said Kittie, laughing and still speaking, a little hoarse from her cold, “ drove mother and I very unceremoniously from the kitchen.”

“ Yes,” Peter rejoined, drawing up a chair and seating himself near her, “ and he seems greatly worried at the news I brought him.”

“ What news ?” mother and daughter asked in the same breath.

“ That Mr. Kent and Mrs. Spafford have gone west.”

“ Gone west ! when ?”

“ They started yesterday.” Mrs. Bryan dropped her sewing, and Kittie leaned forward in a listening attitude.

"Why that is sudden," said Mrs. Bryan.

"Their going, mother?"

"Yes, Kittie dear" It was evident she had taken her feelings under control, that she was completely mistress of herself. Naturally quicker and more impulsive than her husband, it was wonderful how cool and calmly she received the news. A slight pause, her work momentarily ceasing, her eye a little unsteady, that was all. Her voice clear and sharp as it could be, was now soft and musical; her whole manner indicated no more astonishment than the announcement of any of their neighbors leaving home and going on a long journey.

"I hope they may safely return," she said, quietly resuming her sewing.

Kittie, who felt less than her mother, had more to say. Unlike Annie, she had never probed the deeper meaning of the words her father occasionally dropped. To her, Mr. Kent was a most noble, kind-hearted and benevolent man, rather grave, but through his gentleness always approachable. No deep sorrow hung over him, no shame-stricken future awaited him; Clara was his treasure, and the best girl in the world; Mrs. Spafford, an icy, gloomy sort of a person, that chilled and froze her every time she came into her presence. She was sunny and bright herself, and couldn't bear one so overcast and sombre. She pitied her; that is, she tried

to pity her, but signally failed ; all her attempts in that direction only ended in more and more disliking her. She did not believe in people always wearing a smileless face, in their selfishly shutting all light from their hearts, and sitting in gloom and sadness and making every one around them gloomy and sad, too. She thought it was so unchristian like, that her naturally kind heart was blinded to the fact that in her aversion for her, she was not as christian-like herself as she should have been. Annie, graver, and more chill and distant to strangers, could feel more charity for the poor, stern, sorrow stricken woman ; she did not tremble in her presence, she did not recoil from her ; she grew a little more restrained before her, that was all. Kittie was glad it was Annie that happened to be called there to stay a while. As much as she revered Mr. Kent and liked Clara, she felt it would have been more than she could have stood to encounter that stony-faced woman three times a day—at breakfast, dinner and supper. It would have taken away her appetite, she could not have eaten before her, and at the end of the week would have returned home, weak and famished. She wondered how Clara endured her funeral gloom, day after day and week after week. As for Mr. Kent, she did not wonder that he bore it. He was so very superior to any one else, so lifted above the

likes and dislikes, the pleasures and sorrows of the generality of mankind, that she supposed he hardly knew anything about it. He did not live in this world ; bodily with his weak, faltering fellow-creatures ; like John in the Desert, he lived and conversed with the Angels. But now hearing that Clara wanted her, and that Mrs. Spafford was away she was eager and anxious to go to her.

"I must go, mother," she said, "I will wrap up well ; and just as soon as the storm is over, and the roads are cleared, I will ride down there."

"Yes, Kittie," Mrs. Bryan answered, "when the storm is over and the roads are cleared you can go. I don't think myself it will hurt you. You can put on my beaver cloak, it is larger and warmer than yours." Mrs. Bryan threaded her needle, and looked calm and collected ; but her heart throbbed with a heavy fear, and her hands were as cold as ice.

"Mother, you look pale and tired," observed Kittie, noticing the pallor that had settled on her cheek and lips ; "lay by your sewing and rest."

"I am a little tired," she answered, "baking day is always wearing to me."

"Well then rest, mother. What is the use of sewing just as if your life depended on getting those pants done in a given time?"

"No, Kittie, no," she exclaimed, tightly holding

them, for Kittie was trying forcibly to take them from her.

"Help me, Peter," she laughingly entreated. Peter looked awkward, and did not know whether to mind her or not. He half started from his chair, and then blushing like a little girl, sank back upon it.

"Why mother," exclaimed Kittie, in a surprised and startled voice, as in the good-natured struggle her hands came in contact with hers, "your hands are cold and stiff. What is the matter with you, are you sick?"

"No, Kittie, but the night is cold, very cold." Peter at once put more wood in the stove.

"Aunt Catharine," he said, "the night is indeed bitter cold; come and sit up by the fire."

"I will, Peter, if you will move up the stand, so I can keep at my work." Peter hastened to lift the stand in the far corner to the stove, and carefully placed the lamp upon it. Kittie drew up her mother's chair.

"There," she petulantly exclaimed, "now you will be warmer. And mother dear," she kindly added, "don't sew too long. You know there is no necessity for it."

"I won't, darling. I don't want to be hateful," she said, in a lower voice, "but it is hard to sit with nothing in my hands, especially to-night."

"But," remarked Kittie, once more comfortably seated in her rocking-chair, "I wonder father don't come in. I was going to have such a pleasant evening, talking of old times, and listening to the blustering winds ; and now he is out in the kitchen, and mother here hasn't a word in her head. Peter, talk ; say something. When does Clara expect her father back?"

"She don't know when he will be back."

"And Mrs. Spafford, how came she to have to go?"

"She did not tell me ; she said nothing about it. She only told me they were gone, that was all."

"The children, I hope, are not sick."

"They did not go east."

"Sure enough, and to go to them they would have had to. But what can it be?" She knit a few rounds in silence, then she suddenly spoke :

"Ah, I know what it is that has taken them that western jaunt."

"What?" her mother asked, looking eagerly up.

"It has just struck me ; it's about getting back some of their property. Mr. Spafford's failure was not as complete as they thought ; and they have gone out to see about it. That's just it, I am sure." Mr. Bryan came in from the kitchen. The wild, haggared look had passed from his face ; he was his stiff, independent self again. The storm that

had swept over his soul, left scarce a mark behind ; a more set expression in his eye, a firmer compression of his firm mouth—that was all that was visible.

“What was that you were saying about Spaford’s failure?” he asked, addressing Kittie.

“Peter has told you of Mr. Kent and Mrs. Spaford going west?”

“Yes,” he answered, drawing up a chair and seating himself.

“Well, I have just thought what it’s for. Spaford’s failure is not as complete an affair as they thought, and they are going to see about it.”

Had it not been for Annie’s note in his pocket, this conjecture of Kittie’s might have fallen pleasantly on his ears. As it was, he leaned back in his chair, lifted his arms and rested his head against his hands. Fixing his eyes on the stove, he abstractedly replied :

“May be that is it. I don’t know. I can’t tell.”

“But I am sure of it, father. Oh, won’t Clara be glad? for brave as she is, she once told Annie and me that she sometimes sadly missed the elegancies of her old home.”

“Elegancies—did she say that?”

“No, Peter, not exactly that ; but I know she meant elegancies. What she said was, ‘some of the conveniences of her old home ;’ and then she

spoke of her piano, and the large rooms with folding doors and lofty ceilings and soft tinted walls. She said when she first came to her Tasso home, the rooms were so small and low that she felt she could hardly turn round, and it seemed as if the ceiling was going to touch her head every minute. Annie asked her if she thought Tasso would ever seem like home to her; and she answered in her quick, abrupt way: Of course it would, for it did now. Wherever her father was, there was her home; and she was grateful that she had as good a one, many more worthy had worse. Then she showed us her grandfather's picture, and kissed it, and called him a dear, blessed old man, with all his homeliness."

"Then he was plain-looking?"

"Yes, Peter; he didn't look much like her father, he was short and thick, and had a head like a peck measure, and a great, heavy forehead that stuck clear out, and a pair of large, wary-looking eyes peering from under that heavy brow, and a blunt nose, and a tight, puckered up mouth, and a jaw that seemed so firmly locked that it would take an iron bar to open it. Oh, he was homely, Peter, and to see such a beautiful girl as Clara kissing his picture so rapturously was a queer sight"

"I suppose he used to pet her greatly."

Oh, I don't doubt it. But she can't remember him, for he died when she was only two or three

words with reverence, and if he could not altogether agree with them—could not go all his lengths in merciful constructions on the faults and foibles of his fellow-creatures, he was silent. He never thought of contradicting him; such an idea was monstrous, and not for a moment to be harbored. But that Clara knew as much as Kittie fancied she did, was not to be credited. As well acquainted with science, arts, and even politics as he, an excellent and thorough carpenter, was with his tools! Impossible. She was only a young woman just entering life—Peter was twenty-seven, and felt ten years older—and probably she knew a little of these things, and only a little, and that by no means perfect. Kittie was laboring under an amiable delusion. Was it his duty to enlighten her? No, for the delusion was harmless, and the awakening from such is not always agreeable. He remembered when a little boy, of having just such, and as he grew older, and knew more of the world, and the scales fell from his eyes, how at first the clear, sharp light pained them. No, it was no use to tell her she was mistaken; she would find it out soon enough. It is well through life to have good vision, but sometimes these little delusions do no great harm; sometimes they sting into the soul like scorpions. But in Clara's case it would not be so; the awakening, would be gentle, gradual,

and without rudely shaking love or confidence. She was a good, noble-hearted girl; there was nothing mean or treacherous about her.

"And," continued Kittie, seeing Peter did not answer her, "how she has learned to cook and keep the house tidy, she that never had any such thing to do before, and didn't know how to do it."

"She has good sense, and she shows it, Kittie. There's nothing flimsy about her."

He felt he might say this much without betraying any foolish extravagance, or offending in the least against truth, or clashing in the smallest degree with the stern, sensible maxims he had stored his mind with, and meant to follow out. He had been a good son, a kind brother; his hard labor had supported in ease and comfort his aged parents and feeble sister, and, when they were called away, and he was left alone, his uncle Bryan's house became his home when not at his trade. Without the advantages of a regular education, he had employed his leisure moments in careful reading, and now at twenty-seven had a mind well stored with general information. His language was correct, his manners genial and pleasant with his uncle's family, who were all much attached to him, respectful and courteous to those outside of his uncle's home, who knew enough to appreciate merit and worth; no matter if found with hard hands and

weather beaten face, to others he was somewhat stiff, dogged and sullen. If they put on lofty, supercilious airs, and treated him, because of his humble dress and caving, as if he was made of inferior clay and not of the stuff that goes to form the porcelain of the world, he could show as hard and disagreeable a bearing as any one wished to see. He never presumed or pushed his friendship or acquaintance where it might not be wanted ; and therefore when repulsed, as occasionally with all his care happened, he was repulsed forever. He never complained, he never murmured ; he made no moan about it ; he just went on, biding his time, and looking forward to the day when from an humble carpenter working for others, he would take jobs himself, hire his workmen, and lay out and plan, and do all the headwork, and from that again till he would be able to enlarge his means, and add and add to them, till as one of the first architects of the day, with wealth and power at his command, he would take his place among the eminent and prominent men of his time. He was ambitious, and, excellent carpenter that he was, built many an airy castle for the future ; but he kept his ambition to himself. No one that conversed with him dreamed of the glorious visions that danced before him, and kept his spirits bright and glad. They only knew him as a steady, industrious and remarkably intelligent young man.

that knew his own worth, and meant others should know it, too. He maintained his part of the conversation in a pleasant manner, gradually passing from Clara to her brother whom he revered almost as much as his father, till the clock struck ten, and Mr. Bryan, who had been plunged in reverie, suddenly started up.

"Ten o'clock," he exclaimed, "and prayers not yet said. Why Kittie, you and Peter would sit up and talk all night if somebody didn't stop you."

"But, father, I didn't think it was so late."

"Of course you didn't. You wouldn't know it if the hand pointed to twelve. But come now, put away your knitting; and Catharine, too, put by your work; it's time for night prayers." Mrs. Bryan rolled up her sewing, and Kittie her stocking, and laid them in the work-basket; Peter lifted the stand back and placed the lamp on the mantel-piece, then they knelt in prayer, Mr. Bryan being the one to say them aloud.

"Annie has written me a strange note," said Mr. Bryan to his wife, when they were alone.

"What is it, Michael?"

"That two gentleman came, and Mr. Kent and Mrs. Spafford went off with them. That Mr. Kent was sterner than she ever saw him, and Mrs. Spafford wilder and more ghostly looking than ever; that she scarcely bade them good-bye; but as she

drew aside her veil for a moment, in getting in the sleigh, she noticed two big tears frozen as it were, on her cheeks, and that she clung to her father as much as she turned from every body else. She says she must stay till they got back, and she wants Kittie to come and stay, too, for the loneliness presses heavily upon her, and she feels as if every room in the house was haunted. In a postscript, she adds that one of the gentleman was a Mr. Egan, and lives in Rochester, and she thinks he's the great lawyer Egan, the name of the other gentleman she did not learn. Here is the note, you can read it for yourself."

Mrs. Bryan mechanically reached for it, but her hand trembled so she could hardly hold it. Without even glancing at it, she exclaimed :

"The Lord save us, Michael, what does it mean ?"

"I don't know, Catharine, I don't know ; it looks dark, and I fear still greater sorrow is before Felix Kent and his family."

"I fear it, too, Michael, I greatly fear it." The nature of that greater sorrow they did not mention ; they could not ; their hearts turned faint and sick as they thought of it. Mrs. Bryan wrung her hands, and fell on her knees. "Let us offer up a prayer for them, Michael, it's all we can do."

He knelt beside her, and blessing themselves

they fervently repeated the Litany to our Blessed Lady.

CHAPTER X.

THE storm exhausted itself; the weather again became fine. The road through the fields was cleared, and Kittie was taken to Mr. Kent's. Clara had received a letter from her father; it was post-marked from a western town; there was not anything in it that threw light on the cause of their journey; she knew that her father and sister had stood the journey well, that they had been storm-bound for a day or two, and that was all; not a word as to when they would be home, or how long they would be gone; but they were well, the journey had not made her father or sister sick, her uneasiness was relieved, and her spirits revived. Not so Mr. and Mrs. Bryan; though they strove to appear cheerful when they called on her and spoke hopefully of the absent one's return, they had many a whispered consultation together, when dark fears and painful surmises were carefully gone over, and there was a buckling on of warmer friendship and deeper trust in the great and noble Felix Kent. They would never, never forget what he had done for them; they cared not what disgrace came upon

him and his; he was sinless before God, before man he should be without reproach. Shame should not settle upon his spotless soul; they would gather around him; they would show him in their deeper reverence and respect that love for the good, the kind, the merciful and true, was not a myth, a mocking falsehood, but something that really did exist and have its being in this tossed, tumbled-about, busy, selfish and distracted world. When the Hascalls heard of the absence of Mr. Kent and his eldest daughter, Mr. Hascall, poring over his morning paper, exclaimed from behind it:

"Strange, passing strange," and then relapsed into silence, and made no more comments, and did not seemingly listen to any farther remarks. He was plunged in reverie, and folded his paper, and laid it on the table near him, and took it up again, and opened it, and spread it before him, bottom side up, all in the softest and gentlest manner imaginable. Jerome was learning from his sister how to arrange a cluster of conservatory blossoms into a handsome and tasteful bouquet.

Taking a sprig of mignonette from Christine, he exclaimed:

"Now give me some of those grasses and a stem or so of that sober heliotrope." She handed them to him. He fastened them in.

"There now," he said holding them aloft, "they

are perfect. Those large flowers, so regally grand and boasting such impossible names, are effectively toned down. Look, mother."

"Yes, they are well arranged," she observed, raising her eyes from the pages of a review. "But what a muss you and Christine have made. Why did you take them in here; why did you not arrange them in the conservatory?"

"Because John was clipping, and fussing in there, and we did not care to be in his way. Christine picked up the leaves and stems and carried them out, while Jerome placed the flowers in a vase on the mantel-piece. They were intended as a present, but without saying what his intentions respecting them were, he left them there for the present. When Christine came back, and settled herself to her tapestry, he remarked :

"Father thinks it passing strange, Mr. Kent and Mrs. Spafford's going west. I think it's the most natural thing in the world."

"How so?"

"I will tell you. They want to take a trip, pleasure or business prompting it. The railroad is before them, the cars ready, cushioned, warm and comfortable; the train starts, their tickets bought, their seats filled, they are off and lo and behold the whole village is amazed. What for? A man and woman that wanted to go are gone

Everything was in trim for their going, and they are gone. What cause for wonderment in that. They can't expect one will stay at home, as they did half a century ago, when there were only stages rumbling through the country, or still earlier, when you couldn't stir out but you run the risk of breaking your neck on some vicious raw-boned horse. No, no, there is nothing strange in their going where every thing is so convenient for going; it is only strange they did not shut up house and take Miss Clara with them. It would have been kinder than leaving her to pine in loneliness."

Christine was busy, counting off her stitches, and made no reply. He rose and walked up and down the elegantly furnished room, glancing carelessly at the engravings on the walls and thinking of his last call on the Kents, it was two or three weeks before. Christine had some flowers to send to Clara, and he took them over. It was a bright sunny morning; he went up to the door leading into the sitting-room, for he noticed there was no path to the hall-door. He rapped, and a voice clear as a clarion bade him "come in," he opened the door, and the door opposite leading into the kitchen being opened, he saw Clara at the table kneading bread.

"Ah, is it you, Mr. Hascall," she said, "my hands are in the dough, so I could not go to the door. Help yourself to a chair, father will soon be

in ; he is down to the village." He informed her of the nature of his visit : his sister had sent her some flowers ; and he held them forth.

"Oh, they are beautiful," she exclaimed, "I thank her very much," and then she bade him step into the kitchen, go into the buttery, get a glass, put some water in it, and place the flowers in it, adding that as soon as she could she would herself put them in one of the vases on the mantel-piece in the study. He obeyed her, and then ventured to go over the time-honored anecdote of King Alfred's baking bread, and letting it get burnt. She glanced uneasily at the stove.

"More danger of mine not getting enough done with such a fire as that," she remarked, "and then she requested him to put in a stick, and stir up the coals," He hurried to obey her orders.

"And now," she said, "you can lift the pot on the top of the stove, and partly remove the lid ; I don't want it to boil." Delighted to be of service, and much amused at the way she converted him into a little kitchen boy, he humbly asked her :

"Any thing more, Miss Kent?"

"No," she answered, deftly molding the dough into loaves, "not just now ; you can sit down." Permission thus granted, he sat down. Her father did not come in, and yet he lingered, partly to do any other chore she might want done, and partly

to see how so learned a lady would get up a meal. She spoke of his sister and mother, of the Bryan girls, of the weather, of a lecture that had lately been delivered in the village ; but she did not speak with her usual ease and readiness, till by some unaccountable turn in the conversation she got on to the geological structure of the globe. Then she was at home. The Neptunian and Plutonian theories were mentioned ; the palaeozoic, secondary and tertiary periods, chalk deposits, coal measures and fossilized remains, rapturously dwelt upon. Hascall found it difficult to follow her, and inwardly condemned that laziness which left him so far behind. He wondered what she would think of him, and for the first time in his life his sublime self-complacency was a little disturbed. While gathering together the scattered fossils of happily extinct monsters of the secondary or coal-measures periods, she kept a careful watch of the meal in preparation. The vegetables were cleaned and put into the pot ; the meat, thoroughly par-boiled, placed to roast ; the bread, sufficiently raised, lifted into the oven, while that most horrible dragon, the pterodactyles, and his gobling up and exterminating abilities were gravely and learnedly discussed. The table was tastefully set, the meal ready as Mr. Kent came in. After a cordial greeting, Hascall was invited to stay to dinner ; Clara,

in her own way, seconded the invitation, 'Yes, Mr. Hascall, seeing you have waited so long, you might as well stay; I can lay another plate, knife and fork, and set another chair for you.' The manner, on her part at least somewhat different from general invitations, pleased him and he staid. During the meal—which, by the way he was delighted to find, notwithstanding the geologic periods that had been shaken over it in its preparation was extremely palatable, every dish being done, as he mentally termed it, to a turn—the conversation passed into the father's hands, and palæozoic, secondary and tertiary periods had a rest. Clara listened, but said nothing; Mrs. Spafford did not listen, and yet was silent. Jerome Hascall, on his return home, took a few volumes from the library and bore them to his room. He determined, the next time he called on Miss Kent, he would show her he, too, knew something of old mother earth and her past mysterious history. On leaving school, he had made a flying trip to Europe, visited some of the places famous in history, sent home a few letters about them, and then returned home with, as his father thought, his education finished. He had gone through a regular course; he was a travelled man, he might now begin to enjoy life. His ideas of enjoying life were—to have no care, go where you list, and do

what you please, provided your going was not going to evil, and doing what you please was not pleasing to do any thing contrary to Christian law and tenet ; and Jerome, thanks to the moral training of his tutors, and the precepts of his holy Faith, which had been carefully instilled in him, had no desire to transgress the laws of God or man. He was easy, indolent and good-natured, very ready to laugh, and very little given to frown. With a keen sense of the ridiculous, and a thorough enjoyment of every thing humorous that came in his way, he managed, wherever he was, to pick up amusement for himself, without running into excesses of any kind. He was satisfied with his condition in life ; his home, and its surroundings, were elegant, his means ample, he had no sordid fears, no peace-destroying ambition. If laurels were to be won and fame and wealth gained, let them be by those that sighed for them. He did not. "Uneasy is the head that wears a crown," and wretched those that depend for happiness on the breath of public favor. He would have nothing to do with it ; he would not change places with the most successful. He had a peaceful conscience and good digestion ; he did not wish to be deprived of either. Others might follow his example and profit by it ; he was doing his part, for to enjoy is to obey, and he was doing that. But suddenly and unexpectedly his serene self-com-

placency was disturbed; he had laughed at others, he was now in danger of being laughed at himself. He had pronounced Clara Kent romantic and he was mistaken, she was matter-of-fact enough; she was very learned and sensible, and he suspected, although from his late failure in the reading of her character he did not care to say it, a little conceited. He could see it in the rebuke she gave him when, deeming her romantic, he had run on in that fanciful manner about the flowers. His mother and Christine had a fine laugh at his expense, when they got home about it. He must be more careful for the future, and see and weigh well before giving an opinion, lest others besides them might have occasion for laughter too. And he must peep into his text-books and refresh himself from their lore, if he wanted to make a respectable figure before that household encyclopedia. Christine, he supposed, was a learned and sensible young lady, but Miss Kent was something more; she was, if not a genius, at least an original. There was something about her that lingered agreeably in his memory; how unconscious she looked when ordering him about in her kitchen, and how clear and bright her beautiful eyes, and what a childish horror shone in them when she expatiated on the terrible weapons of destruction and torture with which those monsters of the secondary period

were armed, and the sway they must have held over all the created beings of their time. That flying dragon, the pterodactylus, with the wings of a bat! the jaws of a crocodile, the claws of a tiger and the strength of a lion, sweeping through the air, clutching its victims and tearing them to pieces, seemed particularly to engage her attention. With what evident relish she dwelt on it and its associates, and how admirably they supplied the place to her of the fabled monsters and hob-goblins of the nursery. It was only another series of the Child's Book of Wonders got out, and like a child she feasted on them. He could hardly keep from smiling in her face and telling her one of his nurse's old stories of the fiery dragon that lay in wait for bad children, and had arms a hundred feet long and wings that shadowed the whole sky, and eyeballs of fire, and breath that suffocated, and throat that could swallow down at a gulp any number of disobedient and refractory children. But in lieu of that, he spoke of the megatherium. "Why that was a mammal," she exclaimed, "and belongs not to the reptilian or secondary period, but to the tertiary," and forthwith she set herself to inform him of its size, food, habits, etc., and with a vital earnestness told him, and tried to impress upon him, the great necessity of keeping the creations of

each period to themselves, and not mix them all together in a bungling and unscientific manner.

Pausing before his sister's tapestry frame, he remarked :

"Are you going to leave that forsaken child to cry her eyes out without an attempt to soothe or comfort her?"

"What child?" Christine innocently asked, her mind at once reverting to two or three poor families on her visiting list, as she called it.

"Miss Clara Kent. Don't you intend to call on her in her desolation? Her father has run away from her; her sister, ditto; her brother has forgotten her, her nephews have ceased to remember her; shall we neglect her?"

"Why, no, certainly not."

"What will you do? send her up a basket of cold victuals, step into Maxwell's and order a roll of flannel to be dispatched to the house—what?" He stood looking, or trying to look grave. He took up a bright-colored skein, and began unwinding it.

"Stop, Jerome, you are spoiling it, getting it all tangled. Let me have it." She extended a small, delicate hand for it.

"Yes, I will," he replied, holding it away at arms' length, "I will when you answer my question, not before."

"How ridiculous you are, Jerome. Send her up a basket of cold victuals, order a roll of flannel to be dispatched to the house!"

"But have you not sent those very things to some of your cherished pets this blessed morning when you took your airing?"

"I sent them where they were needed."

"And Miss Kent, you opine, is in no danger of starving or freezing?"

"No, thank God, she is not."

"Never the less she is in a very bad way; and it's a shame, with all your charity, that I am the one to point it out. You should know it without my being obliged to tell you."

"You mean she is lonely and would like to see us."

"Exactly so. Would like to see you; I am not so sure about myself. However, you might take me with you; I promise to be on my best behavior, and give you no trouble."

"Why, yes, you can go if you like."

"He will go then," Mr. Hascall, once more himself, from behind his paper, remarked, "Miss Kent will need cheering up, Jerome will cheer her, Jerome must go."

"Yes, father, I will. The voice of parental authority has spoken; its commands shall be

obeyed. When, Christine, do you wish to start?"

"Right away after dinner."

"Very well, I shall be in readiness to attend you." He left the parlor and returned to his room.

CHAPTER XI.

THE dinner over, brother and sister entered the covered sleigh which stood at the door, and were drove to Kent's. Kittie Bryan, as I have said, was there and delighted to see them. She had given so many glowing accounts of the "new neighbors" before they came, and since then had so much to say of Clara's marvellous acquirements, that she was rejoiced to see them there at a time when Clara, eased of her great solicitude for her father and sister and elated with a recent letter from Leo, was in a mood to do full justice to her reports. Just before their arrival, Clara, Annie and she had been talking about the grandeur and magnificence of the heavens, and as soon as propriety would permit, she would refer to their interrupted remarks and give her a chance to verify her words. Christine, in her kind gentle way, had received and never harbored a doubt as to their truthfulness; but Jerome, she fancied, looked incredulously upon them. Now he would see for himself, whether she

was right or not. Jerome, on his part, fortified with the works of Buckland, Conybeare, Cuvier and Agassiz, was ready with intellectual 'mallet to do wondrous execution on the rocks. But while Kittie and Jerome had thus their plans pleasantly laid out, Clara had one of her own that was likely to frustrate theirs completely. She was very much dissatisfied with herself about that geological conversation with Jerome ; that she had asked him to do two or three little chores in her kitchen, never occurred to her as any thing the least out of the way. She would have sneered at one for merely hinting it, and considered them as over nice and dainty. What harm, what possible harm could there be in asking one to do a little turn or two when they could do it just as well as not ? and what was there eccentric about it ? But she was thoroughly displeased with herself for bringing forward again another learned subject. Better have given him a knife and set him to paring her potatoes, and occupied herself in showing him how to do it, than to have dragged forth a subject that could by any possibility be construed into an attempt to show off her learning. He was not, like her wise, kind old father, delighted with every thing of a refined and elevating nature ; he only cared for the glittering nonsense that fashionable young ladies are so fond of ; their gossipy remarks, light as a feather ; so far

as sense was concerned, were just the thing for him. She did him great injustice in this ; but in her dissatisfaction with herself she thought it, and thought it with bitterness. She could see an amused expression in his eyes, she read a light and frivolous turn in his idle and vapidly polite acquiescence to everything she said. It was not, she indignantly felt, from over-respect and extreme deference ; it was only through a perfect indifference for the subjects and a contemptible spirit of mock gallantry. He was rich, she was poor, and he knew it ; Clara was beginning to know it too, and he could amuse himself by letting her run on as she pleased, and like a superior being condescend to turn her learning into a fit subject for his brainless ridicule. No, she would do it no more ; she would not cast pearls before swine and be turned upon and rent. But what should she talk of before him ? He called on her occasionally, and according to etiquette she could not exactly shut the door in his face ; she would have to receive him just as she would any other disagreeable person that was on friendly terms with the family. Her father liked him, so did the Bryans ; he was a respectable member of society ; Father Doyle called him a worthy, inestimable young man. She could see nothing worthy or inestimable about him ; in her eyes he was an idle, vain, conceited person, that only cared to turn

into ridicule solid, sensible people, his betters in every respect. But what should she say when he called? Should she answer a fool according to his folly, and be frivolous and gossipy and empty as himself? No, by no means. Instead of fashion, and dress, and balls, and parties, and lisping quotations of the poets, and the egotistical going over and dwelling upon dainty feelings, likes and dislikes, intended to show their possessors as exquisite and susceptible and refined, she would, God helping her, act and talk like a sensible being. She would not speak of learning, but neither would she chatter like a fool.

She accepted the bouquet Jerome handed her, and thanked Christine for it. He smiled and was silent, but Christine spoke :

"It is from Jerome, Miss Kent ; here is a bunch I have brought you for your vases." She reached her something like an armful of her choicest flowers.

Clara was embarrassed, a rich glow mantled her pale cheek.

"You are too generous, too generous; half would have done just as well. I am afraid you have robbed yourself."

"No, you would not miss them from the conservatory. You like flowers, and I thought I would bring them."

"You are very kind ; I am glad to get them, just now particularly." She thought of presenting them to Our Blessed Lady. She and the Bryans were offering up a *Novena* to her, for her father and sister, and she was rejoiced to be able to offer her so beautiful a tribute of affection and love.

"I will take yours, too, Mr. Hascall," she said, raising her dark eyes to him, "and put them with the others ; they must all go together."

Jerome wondered what she meant ; was she going to box them up, and send them to that father she almost worshipped ? What other person would she send them to ? Of course it was nothing to him, and he knew it, how she disposed of them, but with the second question he experienced a disagreeable sensation stealing into his heart. Clara put away their wrappings, saw them comfortably seated, and then taking the flowers with her for a few minutes, left the room. Returning, she drew up a chair, and seated herself beside Christine.

"You have been so kind to me," she said, "it is but right you should know what I have done with your beautiful flowers. I have presented them to Our Blessed Lady. Kittie, Annie and I are offering up a *Novena* to her for father's and Florence's safe return home."

"I am truly glad we brought them," Christine warmly returned. "Any time you want more, be

sure and let me know. You shall have them with the greatest pleasure."

"Thank you, I will."

Jerome's uneasiness passed away. He was waiting a favorable opportunity for introducing the name of Buckland, Conybeare, Cuvier or Agassiz, when Kittie said :

"Mr. Hascall, you and Christine should have come a little earlier."

"Why so, Miss Bryan?" he asked.

"Because, then you would have heard Clara's remarks about the planet Saturn and the magnificent spectacle the heavens must present to the inhabitants of that distant world, with all its rings and moons. Just think of it ; transport yourself for a moment to its surface, and imagine you see the broad arches of light covering the greater part of the firmament, the moons, some of them crescent, some gibbous, others with full, enlightened faces ; and others again just entering or just emerging from an eclipse ; and through the space between the rings the various constellations appearing faint and twinkling." This was going into the business at once, and Kittie felt sure Clara would enter with her usual spirit into all the particulars, and give them the benefit of her beautiful thoughts and fancies thereon. But instead of that she only looked grave and was silent.

‘Kittie loves astronomy,’ she at length patronizingly remarked.

‘Who could help liking it,’ Kittie returned, ‘i they heard you expatiate on its many wonders. Oh do, Clara, tell us more about it. Mr. Hascall and Christine will be as delighted to hear you as Annie or I.’

‘It certainly, Miss Kent,’ Jerome smilingly observed, ‘would be a great pleasure to us.’ Clara frowned. To comply with Kittie’s wishes was not in the present company to be thought of; to refuse her point blank would be rude. She rose and went to the study; in a moment she came back with a volume in her hand.

‘Here, Kittie,’ she said, reaching it to her, ‘is Dick’s Celestial Scenery; you can open it, and if Mr. or Miss Hascall would like to hear it, you can read to them all about those distant worlds.’

Kittie opened, not the book, but her beautiful blue eyes. She did not know what Clara meant; there was a certain stiffness about her, a coldness in her eyes, a hardness about her mouth that did not belong to her. Had she offended her? If so, how? A rosy glow suffused her cheek. Raising her dimpled hand she pushed back the golden curls escaping from her net. Seeing her embarrassment, Jerome good naturedly said, ‘Let me take the

volume, Miss Bryan ; I will read it aloud, sister and I would be glad to hear it."

She gave him the book, somewhat relieved. To him it was familiar ; he had read it time and again, but to Christine, well acquainted as she was with the ordinary text books of astronomy, it was new, and she listened with wrapt attention. Often had she tried to picture to herself how the heavens would look in those distant worlds, but never before had the glorious pageant passed so clearly before her. It was Saturn Jerome had turned to, and finishing the chapter, he paused and laid the book on the table. There were others to be treated of: Mercury, in such close proximity to the central point of the system, and Venus next, and Earth and Mars, and between him and Jupiter, the many particles of that strangely disrupted world, floating in space, and Jupiter with his moons and belts, and farther and farther on, sweeping in a grand and majestic solitude, Herschel or Uranus, with his six attendant satellites. Neptune, on the very verge of the solar system, had not been discovered when Dick wrote.

"I must read the whole of that," said Christine, looking up from her tatting. "We have Dick's, Jerome?"

"We did have it, but as I have not seen it for

some time I think it must have been lent, and not returned."

"Well then, Miss Kent, will you do me the favor to loan me yours?"

"With all pleasure. You can take it home with you."

"Thank you, and when I am done with it I will not forget to return it."

"Oh, I have no fear of that."

"There is no study," exclaimed Kittie, "I love like astronomy."

"And none," said Annie, "that makes me more wretched." Clara looked up surprised.

"Yes," she returned, "I see so much spread out before me; I want to reach forth my hand and grasp, make sure of something, and I can't. All is grand, mysterious, unapproachable. I learn how small and insignificant is our solar system in the mighty scale of creation; what an imperceptible nothing is our poor little planet Earth, and I feel how worse than nothing must man be in the eyes of the Omnipotent."

A quick reply sprung to Clara's lips, but she repressed it and waited to hear what answer the others would make.

It was Jerome that spoke. "Miss Annie," he said, and there was a low, earnest tone in his voice, a gravity in his whole bearing, "the study of those

distant worlds, and the glory of the heavens spread out before us, is, I know, well calculated to humble man's pride and teach him his own nothingness; but it should not depress him, or make him fear, with all his littleness, that he will be forgotten. While opening his mind and stretching forth his puny efforts to take in a faint glimpse of the wonderful works of creation, he should bear in mind that although now he can only see as the Apostle says 'darkly,' a change will come when he will see even as he is seen, when he will know even as he is known. Not now, imprisoned in the flesh, is he worthy or capable of taking in all the glory of His Father's works. But when the immortal has laid aside the mortal, when the corruptible has put on the incorruptible, then glad, joyous and triumphant will he bask in the sunshine of God's omnipotent power and love. Oh, Miss Annie, the greater our insignificance the greater our confidence in and gratitude to the tender Father who, creating us, redeemed us, his rebellious children at the price of the precious blood of His Son."

Clara looked sharply at Jerome while uttering these words. She was pleased with them, and yet she did not know whether they were intended to agree with what he fancied might be her sentiments on the subject, or were merely the simple expression of his own feelings. If the former, she

would not have cared for them ; in fact, would have been annoyed, shocked ; for it would seem even for the holiest subject he could only entertain a light, mocking and frivolous indifference ; and young and inexperienced in life, as she was, the character of a skeptic was to her the most revolting. Homer Spafford had taught her in her sister how terrible is one without the love and fear of God in his heart. But an earnest truthfulness, a reverential sincerity shone in his whole bearing. She felt a twinge in her conscience at the severity of her judgment against him.

“And this is the lesson the stars have taught you,” she timidly remarked.

“Yes,” he answered in the same tone as before ; and then raising his eyes they encountered hers. What she would call the light frivolous expression, that is the laughing sparkle of humor, was gone ; the calm, sedate gravity of his sister beamed from them. “The heavens confound us,” he thoughtfully continued, “with their grandeur ; we are crushed, we are lost till the Cross appears and lifts us up from our nothingness. In its benign radiance we cease to feel our littleness ; we only remember the infinite price that has been paid for our redemption.”

Clara's eyes were lowered in pain and confusion. His manner impressed her with the sincerity of

his words ; that they were the vehicle of his real feelings she did not doubt. However much the eccentricities of his fellow-creatures might rouse the humorous passion in his breast, for religion, and the things relating to religion, he had a profound and abiding reverence and respect. There the light word, the careless smile was forgotten, and gravity and decorum marked him for their own. She was pleased that she had been mistaken in her estimate of him, and yet pained at the injustice of her dislike. But now was not the time to dwell on her changed feelings, and the cause of them. Annie, Kittie and Christine were silent, waiting, as it seemed, for her to speak. In a voice free from its usual, positive tone, she quietly observed.

“Never, Mr. Hascall, have I gazed on the star-gemmed night that I have not felt the truth of your words. Here surely we only see darkly ; for with all man’s labor, how little can he make out with certainty, and how much rest on the merest hypothesis. A little, ’tis true, we have learned—”

“But that little does not satisfy us.”

“No, sir, it does not. We reach out for more, and not finding it, we build up conjectures and dwell upon them.”

“And these conjectures?”

“They fill us with a more intense longing ; and in the misery of our longing—our nothingness, as

Annie calls it—the comforting assurance that a blessed time will come when the darkness will be removed, and our vision extended, our powers enlarged descend upon us, like the dews of Hebron, to strengthen and sustain us in our weakness.”

“We look up at the sky,” said Christine, “an unreadable page of God’s glory and magnificence is spread out before us; we catch a glimpse of the meaning here and there, and the rest is mercifully veiled. ’Tis well. Like the toilers of Babel, if some restriction was not placed upon us, forgetting our miserable weakness, we would struggle and contend with Omnipotence, and, instead of rendering the page more intelligible, bring upon ourselves inevitable destruction. They said: ‘Let us make a city and a tower, the top whereof may reach to heaven,’ and unaided by the merciful hand of God how far could they have ascended? how high at best could their boasted tower have been?”

“Why, the atmosphere,” exclaimed Kittie, “is only forty-five miles, and they could not have gone beyond that.”

“They could not have reached the whole of that. Respiration would be impossible before they got half way.”

“You are right, Mr. Hascall,” Clara ventured to say, “we know the pressure of the atmosphere decreases as the elevation above the level of the sea

increases. Travellers ascending the summits of high mountains, complain of the difficult breathing and the inconveniences they encounter; blood bursts from the mouth and nostrils, the chest seems distended; the heart throbs and flutters, a faintness comes on, and soon death would close the scene if they did not descend to a denser and more livable air. The highest mountain in the world is Choumalarie, in Hindostan, 29,000 feet high, immense as this seems, contract it into miles and you have only five and a half; not the eighth part of the altitude of the atmosphere."

"And even if it were possible to reach it—which it is not—Miss Kent, what then?"

"Sure enough, Mr. Hascall, you may well ask 'what then?' Is it not the atmosphere that gives us the beautiful and changeful hue of the heavens? Deprived of it, how dark and void the vault above us would be; except directly where the sun appeared all would be black, and his rays unreflected would only serve to make the gloom and darkness all the more visible. But that is not all. The forty-five miles reached, how much nearer the nearest heavenly body would they have been? The moon, the nearest to us, is in round numbers two hundred and forty thousand miles. Subtract forty-five from that, and, after all the toil and impossibilities of

their boasted tower, what an insufferable nothing would have been gained."

"Merciful indeed," said Annie, looking reverently up, "was the hand that stayed them. Left to himself, without some kind restriction upon him, man in his mad strife for knowledge would rush on to certain destruction."

"Much as I admire Dick," rejoined Clara, "there is one thing in his Celestial Scenery that has made me smile."

"What is it, Miss Kent?"

"Nothing more than the grave question, whether another Babylonish tower might not with great propriety be suggested. He does not, of course, call it another tower of Babel, and probably it did not strike him as such, but I don't know what else it could be called. Hand me the book, if you please, Kittie, and I will read the passage for you."

She turned to the two hundred and fiftieth page and read: "It has sometimes been a subject of speculation, whether it might be possible, by any symbols, to correspond with the inhabitants of the moon. Grinthusen, in a conversation with the great continental astronomer, Gauss, after describing the regular figures he had discovered in the moon, spoke of the possibility of a correspondence with the lunar inhabitants. He brought to Gauss's recollection the idea he had many years ago com-

municated to Zimmerman. Gauss answered, that the plan of erecting a geometrical figure on the plains of Siberia corresponded with his opinion, because, according to his view, a correspondence with the inhabitants of the moon could only be begun by means of such mathematical contemplations and ideas which we and they must have in common. Were the inhabitants of the moon to recognize such a figure erected on an immense scale, as a signal of correspondence, they might perhaps, erect a similar one in reply. But it is questionable whether the intention of such a signal would be recognized; and our terrestrial sovereigns are too much engaged in plunder and warfare to think of spending their revenues in so costly an experiment; and, therefore, it is likely that, for ages to come, we shall remain in ignorance of the genius of the lunar inhabitants. Schemes, however, far more foolish and preposterous than the above have been contrived and acted upon in every age of the world. The millions which are now wasting in the pursuits of mad ambition and destructive warfare, might, with far greater propriety, be expended in constructing a large triangle or ellipsis, of many miles in extent, in Siberia or any other country, which might at the same time accommodate thousands of inhabitants who are

now roaming the deserts like the beasts of the forests."

She closed the volume. "There," she exclaimed "I think we have laid down a very fine plan for a second tower, call it by what name you will."

Clara was now in her element; her embarrassment wore away, her words came easily and readily; and Jerome acquitted himself with great credit. He entered with spirit into the subject, and his lucid explanations gave zest to his remarks, and the interest he showed pleased and delighted her. Kittie, Annie and Christine sustained their part with innocent gladness. The afternoon passed, the tea-time came, the friends parted, mutually pleased with each other.

"I declare," said Jerome to his sister on their way home, "I like Miss Kent more and more."

"And you think her intelligent and not pedantic."

"I think her very sensible."

"So do I, Jerome, sensible and good. How much better to talk of learning, than to be tearing some friend to pieces, or indulging in idle gossip. We have not been silent; we have found a great deal to talk about, and we have heartily enjoyed it and now we do not feel any sting of conscience that our enjoyment has been at the expense of our fellow-creatures, or that any stain rests therefrom upon our souls."

"You are right, sister dear, and if we have not heard any thing that was new to us, we have at least had the gratification of refreshing our memories in going over what was already pleasing and familiar to us."

"Exactly so, Jerome."

"We must make her come and see us oftener than she seems inclined."

"It will not be my fault if she does not."

"And we must call on her more frequently ourselves."

"Yes, Jerome, we must."

The sleigh stopped before the door; Jerome helped her out. Mrs. Hascall was in the hall to meet them. "You have had a pleasant visit," she said.

"Delightful, mother," Jerome answered.

"When are Mr. Kent and Mrs. Spafford expected home?"

"I cannot tell," Christine returned, giving her wrappings in charge to a servant who stood ready to take them. "Miss Kent received a letter from her father yesterday; they were well, but did not mention when they would be back."

Brother and sister followed the mother into the parlor.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. BRYAN was seated at a win low in her comfortable sitting-room with troubled face and knitting in hand, wondering why Mr. Bryan did not come in. He had started to the village just after breakfast, was going to step into the post-office, call on the girls at Mr. Kent's, and come directly back ; and it was two o'clock, and still he had not made his appearance. Her dinner had been kept warm, but she was sure its flavor would be quite gone if he waited much longer. She could not tell why he should loiter in that way ; didn't he know she would be expecting him, and wearing her eyes out looking for him ? The boys, 'tis true, had written the week before, so she had no worry about them, but was he not to get a letter from Felix Kent. In his last note to Clara was a word or two that sounded strangely to her and Michael ; Clara, in the warmth of her affection, had given it to them to read. She, blessedly buried in her books, did not see any thing unusual in his saying that he hoped Mr. Bryan still continued his old friendly interest in him ; if so, in a few days he would write him a line. Did he, could he, the true, the good, the noble-hearted Felix Kent, doubt their interest, or their gratitude ? Did he think they could forget ?

The pinching past, with its cold and hunger, its loneliness and desolation, its shame and humiliation, came up, glaringly contrasting with the present warmth and comfort, and home peace and usefulness and integrity. She was the wife of a man every one looked up to and respected ; she was the mother of dutiful, and intelligent and loving children ; her lot was different, far different, from what she once thought or feared it would be, and, under God, who had she and Michael to thank for it, but that great and good man. How he lifted the poor inebriate up, and removing him from temptation, and treating him with respect and confidence, taught him there was yet worth and honor in him ; and how like an angel of gentleness he did it all ! Not a harsh or reproving word, not a glance of scorn or contempt ; and now in his sorrow and humiliation—brought not upon him by any act of his—he expresses a hope that Michael Bryan still continues his friendly interest, timidly adding, if so he would in a few days write him a line. She dropped her knitting needles, and wiped the tears that fell fast on her work. The doubt implied by that hope pained and thrilled her to the heart. With clear, sharp vision, she and Michael read its meaning at once ; it was no question of doubt in them ; that was simply impossible and he well knew it ; it was telling of sorrow and need before him. The dark cloud was gathering

around him, and in the gloom his troubled soul reached forth its hands to meet a warm, friendly grasp. He hoped they still continued their old friendly interest in him! There was a poignant cry of pain in every word of that sentence; it spoke desolation, sorrow and man-forsaken loneliness; it was just such a cry as might have burst from the lips of Job when his great and manifold afflictions rushed in such force upon him. Poor Clara! blissfully buried in her books and conscious of no unfulfilled duty, how happy she was; and what a shock it would be to her, what a terror, what a horror! how would her young heart be bowed down with withering grief and consuming shame. And he was to write to Michael. Was it to break the sad news to her? Brave and strong as he was, did he shrink from telling his bright-eyed, sunny-browed darling the terrible blow that hung over them, and was ready to fall on them? And would Michael do it? Could he? ah, could he? She shuddered, and clasping her hands rocked herself to and fro. The clock struck three; she started up.

"I wonder Michael don't come," she exclaimed, turning vacantly to the window.

She had looked so often, and been so sorely disappointed each time, that she did not think her eyes would now be blessed with the sight of his

familiar form. She had mechanically expressed her wonder at his non-appearance, and other absences of his, and other watchings and waitings of hers, repaid by the sickening realization of her worst fears, came back, and the old dread and sickening feeling at her heart came with it. She took out her beads, and with trembling fingers blessed herself, and raised the crucifix to her lips. The holy and sublime Faith that had carried her through many a dark hour, folded its white wings around her ; the love and confidence, born of sorrow and conscious weakness, that had soothed and solaced her in the days of her desolation, again whispered words of heavenly trust in her ears. With hands clasped, with eyes uplifted, she listened to them, and while she listened, grateful tears rolled over her thin cheeks. A shadow passed the window, a step sounded on the threshold, the door opened, and Mr. Bryan came in. She rose from her knees, on which she had sunk, hastily wiped the tears away, and slipped the rosary in her pocket.

" You have been worrying about me, Catharine," Mr. Bryan remarked, looking steadily at her.

" You are late," she said, her voice still tremulous.

" But I couldn't come sooner," he replied, taking off his overcoat and hanging it up.

"And you have had nothing to eat all this time. You must be faint and hungry. Come right to your dinner, it's all ready. I'll just set the tea a drawing and have it fresh and good for you." She stepped into the kitchen and he followed her.

"Why Catharine," he exclaimed, seeing the table set for two, "why did you wait? why didn't you eat?"

"I couldn't," she answered; "I got thinking and worrying, and had no stomach to sit down to a lone meal." Not a word did she say about the Kents; she did not mention their names; she could not. Her face was very pale, and her eyes had a strained, wistful look. She tried to speak of ordinary affairs, and her voice grew so husky and tremulous that she had to stop. At last, after sitting in silence, and vainly endeavoring to force down a few mouthfuls, she made out to say with quite a show of composure:

"You were a great while gone, Michael."

"I have been to Livy," he answered.

"To Livy?" she exclaimed, in an amazed tone.

"Yes, I got the letter from Mr. Kent."

"Well," she leaned forward; the last trace of color left her cheek, it seemed her heart stood still there was such a feeling of death within her. Mr Bryan cleared his throat and to her monosyllabic remark, answered:

"I don't know what you'll think of it, Catharine, but I have sent him two hundred and fifty dollars. He wrote me his expenses were greater than he expected, and his funds were running low ; he wanted to borrow that amount, and he didn't know any one he felt so free to ask it from as me."

"And you sent it to him?"

"I did. I went direct to Livy, got a draft, and sent it right on. He'll get it to-morrow night or the next morning."

"And Mrs. Spafford?"

"He writes that she is sick, and her physician thinks in a bad way."

"So their coming home is farther off than ever."

"It seems so."

"Did you call and see Clara and the girls?"

"I did."

"You did not tell her of Mrs. Spafford's sickness?"

"Not a word. I thought it better not to ; and in the letter I scratched off to her father I cautioned him not to mention it."

"You did right, Michael."

"And the money, Catharine?"

"Thank God you had it to send him. Thank God!"

"He is in sore trouble, Catharine. Just see what a scrawl his writing is." He took the letter

from his pocket and handed it to her. Her eyes ran hastily over it. At the bottom she looked up and said :

"Here, Michael, are some words I can't make out."

"They are so blotted."

"Yes, blotted and faint, as if they were most washed out."

"That's just it, Catharine, most washed out; and it's with tears, but what are they?"

She moved to the window and peered sharply and closely over them.

"It's about Mrs. Spafford," she said at length, raising her eyes.

"Well, what about her? I tried to study it out but couldn't."

"It's something about Mrs. Spafford seeing something or somebody; what or who I can't just make out. It's not Clara or the children, but right away your name comes in—that is plain enough; and then there is something about me. I see the word Catharine." She conned the lines a while longer, and again looked up.

"I don't know, Michael, but I think it's something about their not coming home. See, isn't that, 'home?'" She pointed to a word, he bent over her shoulder.

"Yes, I should say it was," he answered.

"And, Michael," a bright flush swept over her face, a clear light shot from her eye, and then came a grey pallor and a watery unsteadiness of vision, "I have made it out ; it has all flashed upon me," she faintly said.

"What, in the name of God is it," he excitedly asked.

"Why, he says, Michael, you must not be surprised if you never see Mrs. Spafford again in dear old Tasso, and then he begs you and me to pray for her." She folded the letter, placed it in the envelope, and handed it back to Mr. Bryan. He took it, and without a word put it in his side pocket ; and without a word Mrs. Bryan cleared away the dinner and washed the dishes. The thoughts of both were active enough, and yet they were silent. At length Mrs. Bryan softly and gently said :

"Michael, won't you see to the fire in the sitting-room. I am afraid it will get down." He slowly and stiffly rose to obey her.

Both were earnest and sincere Christians. The pure and beautiful lessons of their holy Faith were ever before their eyes. In the diversity of temper peculiar to each, it shone forth. The one was less positive and truculent in his bearing, more kind and merciful in judgment ; the other less sharp and stinging in her remarks, more charitable and forbearing with the faults and foibles of her fellow-

creatures. For the imperious, domineering, tossing back of the head and thundering out anathemas against the slightest going against his word or opinion, was the lively remembrance of his own unworthiness, and a sort of a harsh, spasmodic generosity of feeling that made him thoughtful and patient, and gave to his bearing a curt but touching gentleness; a gentleness that went straight to the heart, and won him friends on all sides. He might be a little hard, but he could not be cruel or vindictive; there was no meanness about him; under his somewhat rough exterior was a just and merciful soul; a soul dear in the sight of God, because, repressing its natural severity, it looked with charity and good will on all His creatures. The other, fulfilling her duties with all exactness, a model of neatness and order, thrifty and clear-headed, knowing at a glance how to make several ends meet so as to bring out a beautiful and delightful whole, did not look with sour dislike and heartless contempt on others less fortunate. The natural asperity of her temper softened and subdued, an active and energetic pity and compassion shone out. Her tongue was a little sharper than her husband's; her reproofs to the different members of her family considerably readier; but to the world outside she did not dare to be too censorious, and only now and then a curt, rasping word fell

from her lips about it. For Mr. Kent and his family they entertained a profound respect, together with an ardent gratitude for his kindness to them. In the days of his prosperity this made itself known in a quiet lighting up of the eye when his name was mentioned, and a warm, comforting feeling nestling round the heart whenever their thoughts recurred to him. But since his trouble, and in the dread of the unknown sorrow that hung over him, it thrilled their beings with an intensity of affection undreamed of before. He was glorified in their sight, he was exalted and made holy, he was a hero, nay more, a thousand times more, he was a saint. They looked upon him with a hushed and almost awe-struck veneration; they listened to him as to an oracle that could not deceive; their faith in his goodness and worth became unbounded, and when they thought of the shame and humiliation that hung over him, they felt like gathering him in their arms and shielding him from the rough usage and contempt of the world. If they could not do this they would battle for him, ward the blows from his head, and in their increased devotion prove to him that he was still loved and revered.

Mrs. Bryan was the first to speak. Mr. Bryan had sat and listlessly watched her fingers going round after round of her stocking. Looking up

and noticing his fixed gaze, she timidly remarked

"If it please God to call her, I don't know Michael, as any one ought to regret it. It would be a great favor to her poor father and the rest of them."

Mr. Bryan started. "Catharine," he sharply exclaimed, "you don't know what you are saying."

"I do, Michael, I know well enough what I am saying, and I repeat it: if it was God's will to call her, there are none that need regret it!"

"But if she was not prepared? If she went, as strange and hard as she has been ever since his death, wouldn't there be a wild grief—wilder and more terrible, Catharine Bryan, than all the shame and sorrow of the world?"

"Of course there would, and I know it. But when I said if it was God's will, I meant ; prepared. Oh! I didn't think of her going before the judgment seat unprepared. God, in His infinite mercy forbid that any of us should have such a fearful ending."

"But, Catharine, could she be reconciled to the Church, or allowed the sacraments without a public confession of a public crime like hers?"

"Public crime!" she repeated, in an amazed, frightened voice, "public crime! Michael, how do we know she is guilty of any?"

"How do we know, Catharine! Why has she

kept away from the church, and the sacraments ? and what has turned her heart into stone, and made her so cold and dead to every one around her ? What does it mean ?”

“ I don't know, Michael ; I am as much in the dark as you, but I can't think—it burns into my brain whenever it comes up—that she was ever left to do so black a thing.”

“ Then why is she so changed ? She used to be pious and mild, and good under her affliction—why is she so changed ?”

Tears actually stood in his eyes, and heavy drops bedewed his brow. He took out his handkerchief and wiped them away. “ I would give all I am worth,” he sorrowfully added, “ to see her what she once was.” After a few moments' silence, he thoughtfully exclaimed : “ Yes, she may die away from home, and Felix Kent, her father, may return without her, and the world may never know the black disgrace that hung over him, but it will be no comfort to him. His grief will eat all the more into his heart, and in sorrow he will go down to the grave.” He rose and walked up and down the softly carpeted floor. Mrs. Bryan did not speak, she could not contradict his words, and hope paled within her. With a weary, troubled look on her white face, she bent her eyes on her work and

watched the glitter of her needles. Pausing in his walk, Mr. Bryan again sank into his chair.

"I saw Hascall to-day," he remarked.

"Where?" Mrs. Bryan asked, looking up from knitting, and feeling some response was expected.

"In Livy," Mr. Bryan answered. "Just as I was going out of the bank, I met him coming in. He shook hands with me, and asked when I had heard from Mr. Kent; I told him I had to-day, that he was well, but his return was uncertain."

"You said nothing about the draft you sent him."

"Why, no; what on earth would I be telling him that?"

"Well, well, I know, but go on."

"He then asked me if I saw Mr. Egan that time he was to Kent's."

"Why, Michael, Clara must have told them he was there."

"No, she didn't, Catharine; it was not from her he heard it. That child, buried in her books, has no time to be letting out family secrets. But he said he saw him himself just before the cars started; that he was an old friend of his, and the best soul alive. And, Catharine, looking round, and seeing no one near us, in an under tone he added, 'the best criminal lawyer in the world?'"

Mrs. Bryan started and wildly exclaimed, "O Michael, Michael, he knows."

"He either knows or suspects; which, I can't say."

"But what answer did you make?"

"At first I was a little taken aback, but soon rallying, I merely said, 'indeed,' and with that was going to leave him, but he kept hold of my hand, and would not let me go. 'You knew Mr. Spafford,' he said. 'Yes,' I answered, wondering what his sudden interest in the matter meant."

"Wondering, Michael! He is not the only one that will feel interest in it. Any thing like poor Felix Kent's trouble finds open-eyed interest enough in the world."

"Of course it does, Catharine. But not till it comes out."

"Well, may be he has heard something."

"Or wants to, which is about the same thing. But it wasn't much he was like to get from me, I can tell him that."

"But when you said 'you knew Mr. Spafford?'"

"He then asked me if they lived happily, he and his wife?"

"That was questioning closely. What did you tell him?"

"I wanted to tell him I was too much engaged minding my own affairs to be poking my nose into

that of others ; but on second thought, I was afraid throwing myself into a passion or showing rudeness about it, would look suspicious and give him a worse opinion of her than the facts warranted, and so I just told him what sort of a man Homer Spafford was, and what a patient, gentle and good wife Mrs. Spafford had been to him, and what a noble, generous father-in-law Mr. Kent had been."

"And what did he say, Michael, when you told him that."

"He said he did not doubt me, as he—Mr. Kent—had lost all his property by him."

"He knew then how Mr. Kent's failure came."

"Yes, for I had told him that before, one day that I was speaking to him about the new neighbors. He thinks Mr. Kent the noblest man he ever saw ; the most sincere and perfect Christian. I felt my heart swell within me, I was choked up, I could hardly speak, I thought of all his goodness to us ; and drawing him into a corner, where there were no prying eyes or ears, I just told him what he had done for us, and what a miserable, fallen sinner I was, till, like an angel of God's mercy he lifted me up and made something of me."

Tears were coursing down Mrs. Bryan's cheeks, but she made no comment, only listened with intense and trembling eagerness.

"He was greatly affected," continued Mr.

Bryan, after a slight pause, "but said that it was no more than he expected to hear of him ; that he had been struck with him from the first, and the more he learned of him the more his favorable opinion was confirmed. He likes Leo and Clara, too, but he looks on Mrs. Spafford as a strange person. I told him she didn't appear as she once did, and then, to give another turn to his thoughts, I mentioned that I feared her sorrows had touched her brain. He answered, he shouldn't wonder, and then remarked that Egan would make good use of that."

"Good God, Michael ! what did he mean ?"

"I think, Catharine, that it's not hard to make out what he means. He has the same fears we have, and what cause he has for them I don't know. I am sure I have never breathed a word to him about ours, and, therefore, from somebody else he must have learned something that has roused his suspicions. As to Egan using her insanity as a plea, I told him I didn't know what good or harm it would do, or why it would be needed. He looked sharply at me, opened his lips once or twice as if to speak, and then drawing his dead-and-alive look on me, rose and began to talk of the weather and the roads soon breaking up, and shook hands with me a second time, and bade me good bye."

"But, Clara, that poor innocent child, does she seem to have any idea of it?"

"I don't think she has, Catharine. While Mrs Spafford was with her she seemed, by the girls' talk, to have now and then her fears and doubts, but since she went they have melted away. Her father and Florence are gone about something or other, she don't know what, but, the something accomplished, they'll come home, and all will go on in the old style. That is all she knows about it."

"When you told her her father was well?"

"She took it for granted her sister was, too."

"I suppose she thought if she wasn't, you would have mentioned it."

"Yes, Catharine, she no doubt supposed it, but I felt it were better to say nothing to her about it. My heart ached as I looked at her, wrapped up in her studies, her only trouble being to find out how many rings Saturn—I believe that's the one—really has, and whether some other planet, lately discovered, has one or half a dozen moons. I don't know," he added, looking thoughtfully at the stove, "but it has struck me that it is a blessing that she is so much engaged in such things. May be she'll not feel the sting so bitterly or sense what a disgrace it will be."

"May be so, Michael, but I doubt it. Suddenly

waked up from her dreams, I am afraid it will fall like a thunderbolt upon her."

"Well, anyway, I would hate to be the one to break it to her."

"But if her father wanted you to?"

"I would try to do it ; but God help me, it would be a hard job."

"What if I let drop a word or so to her?"

"Don't think of it, Catharine ; if the worst comes to the worst I will do it myself. Felix Kent is a great and good man, and to think that such a grief should come upon him, and that a child of his should be left to do so black a crime ! To think it, Catharine, to think it !" His eye had the wild intensity of gaze that speaks of anguish and frenzied sorrow.

"I say, Catharine," he exclaimed, raising his arm.

"Hush, Michael," Mrs. Bryan whispered, "I hear a step ; Peter is coming."

The door opened, and Peter Cleary entered. Mrs. Bryan left the sitting-room to see to the supper, and Mr. Bryan went with Peter to the barn.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FORTNIGHT, three weeks passed ; the cold of winter was giving away before the genial advance of Spring. Clara was getting heartsick at the delay of her father ; his frequent and kind letters by no means supplied the place of his gentle and loving presence. " If I should never see him again— if he should never come home," began to be her wailing cry. As anxious as Jerome Hascall and his sister had been to call on her and draw her in return to their house, she had not seen them since the day of their visit. Jerome's father had important business in Washington, and his confidence in his son was such that he entrusted its management to him. When there, Mr. Hascall suddenly recollected several old friends residing in the place, and sent him letters of introduction to them. Thus between urgent business and pleasant visiting, he was kept agreeably occupied. As to Christine, her careful father had discovered Tasso was becoming too dull for her ; she was drooping and pining under it, she must have a change, and he bethought himself of sending her to an aunt living in New York. In her house she would have all the comforts of home, and feeling none of the embarrassments of being among strangers ; and she would.

besides, see a little of life, and mix a little in society, and it would cheer her up, and do her a world of good. Christine herself did not feel any falling off of her usual strength, but her kind father did, and, looking through his eyes, it soon became evident to her mother. The consequence was, that Christine left home almost as soon as her brother, and therefore, neither brother nor sister was able to call on or receive calls from Clara for the present. No one regretted it more than Mr. Hascall, or was less to blame about it ; no one, in fact, was to blame ; such things will happen. But Clara was sad and lonely, her studies palled on her, and Annie and Kittie found it hard to turn her thoughts from that one subject—her father and his absence. In her letters to him, in spite of her efforts to hide her uneasiness and write in a pleasant, cheerful strain, was a weariness and sadness of tone that told of a heavy and drooping heart. “Don’t stay longer than you can help, but yet don’t hurry yourself too much ; don’t over do ; for if you should get sick and die away from me, I should never be able to forgive myself.” Such would be the order of one letter. The next, instead of telling him how lone and silent the house was, and how that loneliness and silence were eating into her very brain, she only mentioned that the dear Bryans were joining with her in prayers for his safe return.

that they had finished two *Novenas*, and were well on a third ; that he must not worry for her, for she was getting along famously ; and this she had to write over, for the tell-tale tears would certainly let out too much, and fill his dear, good heart with grief. If he had to stay, he had to, and she must not make his staying any more painful than it need be ; it would be anything but agreeable to him, anyway. And flattering herself that she effectually hid her uneasiness from him, she redoubled her prayers for his safety, and talked of him incessantly. The Bryans showed their fidelity in the most devoted attention. Never a day that Mr. and Mrs. Bryan did not drop in upon her with bright, smiling faces and cheerful, hopeful words ; and knowing how much this assumed lightness of spirits cost them, and how they had to struggle and bury fears out of sight that would have crushed poor Clara to the earth, it is wonderful how well they succeeded.

"I would get quite down, Kittie and Annie," she said, after one of their calls, "if it was not for your father and mother. How they cheer and comfort me. God bless them ! there is something good about them. They have good hearts."

"To be sure they have," Kittie warmly returned, "and the best company in the world."

"Except father," Clara sighed.

"Well, yes, except him," Kittie good naturedly

admitted, "there is no one can take his place with you."

Mr. and Mrs. Bryan were kept advised of Mrs. Spafford's state. From acute suffering and utter prostration, she at length rallied, and Mr. Kent began to hope she might soon be able to return home.

It was early in May. The trees had put on their first tender leaves, the yard was carpeted with velvety green, and the breath of the new year flung a freshness and fragrance over the earth. In the house it was pleasant and cheerful; the spring's cleaning was done, and the neatness and order every where visible within, were in such unison with the outside beauty and freshness, that the mind felt happier and more contented by it. Mrs. Bryan was busy seeing to her dinner, and giving a few finishing touches in the morning readying up of the sitting-room, when glancing out of the window she saw Mr. Bryan coming up from the gate. He had been to the village, and she could see he was greatly moved as he entered the room.

"What ails you, Michael," she asked, pausing with duster in hand, and he sank down on the nearest chair and laid his hat on the next beside him.

"They are coming home, Mr. Kent and Mrs.

Spafford, they are on their way now. They started yesterday morning."

A surprised and joyous look broke over her face "The Lord save us, Michael," she exclaimed, "is that so?"

"It is, Catharine, we shall see her again." There was an emphasis on *her*. It spoke volumes. Strictly keeping secret her sickness from Clara, they had begun to fear it was only an excuse her broken-hearted father was using to account for their protracted absence. Again they thought it might be so, and profoundly ignorant of the process of the law, they wondered if that would stay the proceedings, or would the suit go on. They did not dare to ask for fear the motive prompting their question might be suspected. They groped about in their darkness from one fear and doubt, and surmise and wonder, to another, never knowing how it would come out, or when the terrible facts would be made known to the public, and poor Clara feel the full shame and anguish of her unfortunate sister's sin and sorrow. But now in her coming home, they felt a great uplifting of their dread and terror; in some way poor Felix Kent had passed through the worst, and his gentle and bruised spirit might yet regain its old serenity, he might look the world in the face without fear or reproach, for no sin rested on him. In it all, he had been, and would be,

blameless. When Mr. Bryan assured her of their return a—

“Thank God, Michael, thank God,” welled up from her full heart. After a moment’s pause she remarked. “With all our fears, she couldn’t have done it. She must have been innocent.”

“She is coming home, Catharine,” Mr. Bryan answered ; then laying his hand on the table he solemnly added, “there is a strange mystery hanging around her that we can’t unravel ; may be sometime it will be made plain ; but at present it is dark, muffled up ; only one thing we know, Felix Kent is coming home, his daughter is coming with him, and you and I have no terrible news to break to that poor child.”

“Thank God that we haven’t, Michael.”

“Thank God, Catharine. I dreaded it so much that my heart turned sick and faint every time I got a letter from him, I was so afraid of what would be in it.”

“But have you told her now of their coming?”

“To be sure I have. I just gave her her father’s letter ; she run her eye eagerly over it, and then seized my hand and cried and laughed all in the one breath. Slipping the letter into her pocket, she made me go with her and the girls to her oratory—you know the little closet, back of her room.”

"Yes, yes, where she keeps the dear Madonna's statue."

"And kneel down with her and them, and return thanks to our dear Lord. I couldn't help the tears coming, there was such a trembling joyousness about her."

"But did you tell Andrew, so he can go for them?"

"Yes, I told him; but he's not going; I am going myself. I shall be in Livy bright and early to-morrow morning."

Mrs. Bryan had given the last touch to the room, but she lingered to say, "after dinner I think I had better run down and help the girls a while."

"You can go if you like, for they'll be glad to see you, but they'll not need much help. The house is all clean, from cellar to garret, and they have enough baked up to last them a fortnight. They showed me a row of pies and cakes, and five or six big loaves of bread."

"I knew they had the cleaning done, but when did they do the baking? I was there yesterday morning and saw nothing of it."

"Of course you didn't, for it wasn't done then. They didn't do the pies and cake till in the afternoon, and this morning they done the bread. Clara said she didn't know what set her at it, but she felt urged on, and couldn't stop, and the result is they

have enough to feed a regiment. I couldn't help laughing when I looked at it. I told her if all that was for her father's and sister's coming home, they must be the greatest gluttons in the world."

"Why, Michael, wasn't you ashamed to talk to her in that way?"

'Not a bit of it, Catharine; she knew it came from a light heart, and it fell on a light heart too. She clapped her little hands and laughed right joyously, and said she would tell father what I called him and Florence. Oh, she's a blessed child, Catharine, a blessed child."

"She is, Michael," Mrs. Bryan heartily responded, and hastened to the kitchen.

Mr. Bryan threw the bit of a twig he had been twisting and twirling in his fingers out of the window. The thought that had been stirring in his mind since getting Mr. Kent's last letter, again came up. Had there been a suit? If so, how had it escaped the papers. His two weeklies and one monthly never meddled with such things; they had other matter to attend to, but he knew there were papers that delighted to serve up to their readers, as delicate tit-bits, all the shuddering, soul-sickening particulars of just such unfortunate affairs, and how came they not to in this case? He knew they had not, for, for the first time in his life, he had kept a careful watch of them. Not once did he go to the

village that he did not run his eye over every startling paragraph in all the papers he could lay his hands on, and not a word had he seen about it. But it might, for all that, have been in some that he had not happened to get hold of. No, that was impossible ; others in the place would have seen it, and, partially acquainted with the parties, or their relatives, the whole village would have buzzed with it. No danger of its being in the papers, and he not hearing of it. But was there a suit ? Why did Egan and that other man come for them ? How came they to go with them ? to be obliged to go, as it seemed ? What did that mean ? Was there really any prospect of getting back some of the property ? Was that what brought Egan and his friend there ? Was there some little trouble apprehended, and were they employed as counsel. No, the thought was foolish. If any such thing had been in the wind, Felix Kent would have told him all about it. There would have been nothing in that to hide ; nothing that would have brought that well-remembered look of agony to his face when he spoke of Annie staying a while with his Clara, nothing that would have stirred up the great calm of his nature, and made him so strangely abrupt and stern, as Annie told him he was, the evening of his leaving. No, no ; Felix Kent was not so wedded to money as to have its loss or gain affect him in that

way. It was something else, something that possessed a terrible meaning for him. He drummed his fingers on the table, looked fixedly at the clock, moved uneasily in his chair, and then, leaning his elbow on the table, rested his cheek on his hand. As he said, the mystery was as much unraveled as ever, some of the dire consequences growing out of it had passed harmlessly by, and he breathed easier and felt as if a weight had been lifted from him. How they came to pass he did not dare to question too closely. He would have given worlds to have had it cleared up, and Florence what she once was; but diving down beneath the surface of the matter made him sick and faint as the fear of that dreaded letter from Felix Kent; looking vacantly out of the window, he did not see the blue sky with the great masses of clouds piled against it, or hear the singing of the birds in the trees before the door, or the gentle murmur of the wind coming down from the hills, he only realized an indescribable feeling weighing on his heart on this beautiful spring morning. The breeze coming in lifted his dark locks, and fanned his sun-browned cheek, his deep eyes took a still deeper meaning, his broad chest moved as if his breath came heavily, he longed to take Mr. Kent aside, after his return, and ask him what it all meant. He did not make a resolution that he would, for he felt such a

resolution could not be kept; that once in the presence of that venerable, saintly man, the mere thought would look shocking and heartless. Take advantage of his sorrow and misfortune, and probe his heart-breaking secrets to their core! No, no, he could not do it. He was not a brute; he could feel for him, he knew what his own sufferings, in his place, would be, and how he would want another to act toward him. He slowly and stiffly rose, and taking his hat walked to the door. Hearing his step, Mrs. Bryan made her appearance.

"Where are you going, Michael?" she asked.

"I am going to the field to see how James is getting along with his ploughing."

"But you are not going to ploughing, yourself?"

"Yes, Catharine; the south lot is dry enough now."

"But wait till after dinner; it will be ready in half an hour, and you wouldn't more than get the horses out by that time."

"But James, Catharine, should see that there's some one to have an eye on the work."

"You think he's one of them that plays shirk when your back is turned?"

"No, I can't say that I do. But it's well enough to show some interest. If they know their work is looked after, it makes them more particular; and, besides, I want to see how the furrqw turns up. I

am afraid, after all, the ground was too wet. I had a great mind not to set him at it, and now I am sorry I did. I saw Sandford's to-day, and he'll have a nice job of it, dragging and rolling to break up the lumps."

"And you think yours is as bad?" She wanted to engage him in conversation till she got the table rolled out into the middle of the floor and the cloth spread, then she knew he would not think of going out till after the meal.

"Yes," he answered, "I am afraid."

"But that lot is dryer than Sandford's land, Michael."

"I know it is, but some how this year it has been the wettest I ever saw it. Peter thinks the new drains put down last fall have made it. He advises me to put down others and carry them to the creek, and that's what I shall do."

"Peter," Mrs. Bryan exclaimed, coming back from the kitchen. The door between the two rooms being open, she could, passing back and forth, hear him and attend to his remarks, just as well as if she was in the room all the while. "Why, Peter's been here this morning, and I forgot all about it till this blessed minute."

"Did he get the job at Maxwell's?"

"He did. He's going to bring on his workman next week."

“But Sterns?”

“He tried for it, offered to do it for less than Peter, and Peter says he can’t see for his life how he could underbid as he did. He made the closest calculations he could, and that Sterns could go below him looks as if he didn’t mean to half do his work.”

“I hope, Catharine, he didn’t put the figures too low. There would be no gain in such kind of jobs.”

“No, he didn’t. He says he allowed himself fair, regular wages, for he wasn’t to throw his work in for nothing, no reasonable man could expect it, and then he placed the whole matter before Seth, and he soon talked the old man into letting Peter have it.”

Mr. Bryan sat down again on hearing this. He felt he could afford to ; this was his nephew’s first job, his setting up in business for himself, as it were ; and there was that in him that foretold success. Peter would go ahead ; he had been kept back in the past, he had had his own way to make, and slowly and surely he had made it. He was poor still, but there was no one in the place more looked up to or respected. How he managed to get enough to bring himself over, and then when here, how he sent his first earnings to get his parents to him, and when he got them how he toiled to support them, and that poor Bridget who was always so

feeble and helpless ; and when they died, and he was left alone, how he went to work then and learned a trade, and what a master hand at it he was now. Maxwell might well afford to give the job to him instead of to that slighty, slovenly Stern. He knew it, too, as well as the next one. He was not the man to be persuaded by Seth or any one else to pay more, unless he saw the gain working into his own pocket. By-and-by, Peter would not have to go for jobs ; they would come to him, for people would find it to their profit to put their buildings in the care of them that had conscience and good sense to guide their hands. But Seth was good-hearted to use his influence for him. He supposed the fixing and enlarging of the store meant his father was going to take him in partner. It would be a wise move in the old man to do it. He was glad Seth had listened to him ; he would now find his benefit in it. He didn't think it quite the thing for parents to be too close-fisted with their sons, but then sometimes it is impracticable, nay impossible, to meet all the demands of these young gentlemen. It is, under such circumstances, better to be a little stiff, and keeping a firm grip on the purse-strings, teach them a few lessons in economy, self-reliance and industry. Such lessons may be hard for them to learn, but the earlier in life they are set about them the

better it will be for them. It was evident that this was also the opinion of old Maxwell. He acted it out in the most inexorable manner. Seth groaned under the hardness of his lot, wondered if ever any body was so cruelly used, asked himself, with a tragic energy, what was to become of him, and was he always to be so treated, so hampered and tied down. His father, in his estimation, was the bitterest enemy he had, or ever could have; his mother and sisters had some feeling for him, his miserly father not a bit. All the feeling in his heart was for his pocket-book. He hadn't a particle of natural affection. If the mother and daughters and son were dead, he would not care, so that his gains all the time went on. He might look sober and stick crape on his hat for appearance sake; but it would be for appearance and not because death had made a gap in his home that could not be filled up. He knew how it was, and all the crape he could pile on him wouldn't deceive him. But it was not a question of death and crape now. It was a question of life, keen, stirring, and would be successful, and how was it answered? what response did his father make? he only sneered, talked of wild-goose chases, and made the most insulting comparisons. Thrilling as he was with grand hopes and noble purposes, he meanly pushed him back and never let him take a step forward; in his vanity, and

stultified conceit he thought no one knew anything but himself. It was more than he could bear ; he would break from his bondage ; he would go where he could breathe and feel himself a man among men. He would go west where he had been sighing for years to go. As cool as a statue of ice, old Maxwell saw him make his preparations, his tight-drawn lips never relaxed, his eyes never softened, his heart never relented. A likely story, he was going to listen to every wild proposal of that boy, and scatter his hard-earned gains to give him a chance to make a fool of himself ! Not he. If he wanted to go west, and try his fortune, let him. He had nothing to say against it. But he'd find out a pretty difference between roughing it among strangers and having his own father's home to go to. He'd see the leaves of the trees there in the woody part, or the spires of the grass of the prairies, were not of gold, and that he'd have to go to work and do more than he ever knew him to do, if he wanted to get along. That fortunes didn't come for the mere wishing ; that care and thrift would be needed there as well as anywhere else. Seth bade his tearful mother and sisters good-bye, and got Bryan to take him to Livy to the cars. On the way he opened his sorrows to him ; Bryan listened, soothed, and—sent him back to his father. The mother and sisters received him with open arms,

the father smiled grimly, and let out an exasperating look of triumph from the corner of his eyes. Without hardly knowing it, or by any means coveting the honor, Bryan found himself from that a mediator between them. When the father was incensed at the selfish exactions and thankless indifference of his son, he laid the matter before him. He pitied him, consoled with him, and spoke a kind word for Seth. He was a little thoughtless now, for he was young, but the grain would ripen and show a full head, there was no rust or canker at the core; nothing that foretold a bad harvest. Boys of his turn were trying, and people had to use a world of patience with them, but by-and-by he'd show he was of the right stuff, and his father would be proud of him. When Seth, perfectly crushed at the narrow-minded penuriousness and double-distilled meanness of the old man would fly to him he would advise him to bear patiently, and acquiescing in a belief of the hardness of his lot, point out the many excellent traits of the father, his perfect honesty, his skilful management, and the wonderful abilities he showed for a man of his age. Under his guidance the father at length began to be a little more indulgent; the son a little less exacting. Mr. Maxwell had commenced life as a farmer; but when Seth was ten or twelve years old, he sold his farm and opened a dry good

store in Tasso. His neighbors all prophesied he would regret the step ; whether he did or not they never knew ; for the matter referred to in his presence, he only shook his head in a very non-committal manner, said farming was the best business in the world, but there were other things a man could get his living by just as well, if he only kept his thoughts about him and did not let them go a wool gathering. He had been a farmer and had made his acres yield ; he was now a merchant—it was noticed that he laid an agreeable stress on the word—and he ventured to say he was no poorer. At last it became evident, instead of being poorer he was actually richer. He did not show it by living in finer style or in keeping up grander appearances ; he still occupied the same little white cottage, his store was not enlarged, and with the buildings springing up around it, was beginning to have a decidedly rusty look ; but he was known to be a heavy stock-holder in the Livy bank, and to have large sums loaned to responsible persons.

“ Catch Maxwell letting his money go,” the farmers used to say, “ without good security. They’d like to see him lose a debt, they would. Yet he wasn’t the hardest creditor, nor by any means, tight as he was, one to take a mean advantage. He’d wait, and wait, and by-and-by go to work and **manage** so they could pay him without too much

distressing themselves. And then he was strictly honest in the store ; they could send a child to him just as well as a grown person, he kept the best of every thing, only charged a fair price, and took any kind of produce ; this made him a general favorite with the farmers, and brought him in excellent customers, and following in their wake good and generous profits. They could put up with his closeness when they knew he was fair in his dealings, and as truthful, to use their own words, as the nature of his calling would permit. He might sell at cost—he always declared, when beat down, he did—or a little below it ; they had no fears, but some way or other by some legerdemain trick of trade, he would bring out very respectable profits to himself. Seth hated the name of store or counter. Did he want to be a farmer ? No. The hurry, and drive, and drudgery of a farm were something absolutely terrifying to him. Did he want to enter one of the learned professions ? What, turn lawyer, and learn how to cheat in an honest, systematic manner ? • Be a doctor, and with the liveliest sympathy for suffering, kill more than he'd cure ? Take to preaching and forget to practise ? Not he, not he. Well, what did he want ? or did he know what he wanted ? To be sure he did. He wanted a little ready cash in his pocket, more back to call on if he needed it, go out west

and speculate—buy and sell and grow rich. His father bade him *earn* the ready cash first; and this was the way he nipped his cherished aspirations in the bud. Bryan, in his dealings with the son and father, did not go his usual way to work. He remembered Felix Kent's mildness and gentleness to him, and instead of hut-tutting at Seth, and exposing, with cutting comments, the injustice of his dislike to his father, he soothed him, mollified his resentment, and encouraged him, that his father would open his purse when he found he was one he could trust. In order to waken this trust he advised him what to do. To remain in the store, prove himself an efficient salesman and one capable of carrying on business. With the father, keeping the saintly Felix Kent still before him, he was kind, considerate and thoughtful, approved of his wisdom, felt for his trouble and prophesied he would live to be proud of his son. A regular course behind the counter would cure him of his folly, and by-and-by, over his western fever, he would partake himself with diligence to his father's calling. He watched over, and kept up the industry of the one, the flagging hope of the other; and now, after the lapse of five years the result was, the father had all confidence in Seth and was going to take him in as partner. And Seth was as promising a young merchant as could be found in Central

New York. Both father and son, perfectly reconciled to each other, had a warm affection for the Bryan family. It was even hinted that Seth had something more than friendship for the blue-eyed, golden-haired Kittie. The table was set, the dinner smoking upon it as James came in from the field.

"Well, James," said Mr. Bryan, "how does the ground come on, pretty wet yet?"

"No sir," he answered, pushing back the moist hair from his freckled face, "turns up like an ash heap."

"How far have you got?"

"To the stump, and a new ground cut out."

"You have done well. I am going to the south field after dinner. I will just stop and see how the furrows lie."

James made no remark but went on with his meal. If he felt Mr. Bryan doubted his word, and was indignant thereat, he made no demonstration of his anger. His eye was calm, his hand steady, and to a farther question concerning the said field, whether it would be advisable to drag twice before rolling, he returned a mild, equable answer. By-and-by he would have a farm of his own, and he would want a hired man of his to have some respect for the care, which, as master, he ought to have over it. Mrs. Bryan had several remarks to make about the garden, the peas and beans, the

sweet corn and the Hubbard and summer squashes that were to be seen to and not neglected. James listened, bowed his head and promised the strictest attention to them and every other vegetable mentioned. Mr. Bryan said nothing, but thought all the time of his next day's ride to Javy.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I HOPE in God, Michael, you will find her changed."

"I hope so too, Catharine," Mr. Bryan said, getting into his carriage. There was a grimness about him as he seated himself, and slackened the reins. He was beginning to feel something like Kittie towards the poor, sad-eyed woman in her icy wretchedness. With his overflowing sympathy for her father was springing up in his heart a bitter aversion for her. "It's not right in me to feel towards her as I do, and I know it," but knowing it, did not change or soften those feelings, I think it rather added to their intensity, for the dissatisfaction they occasioned with himself reverted to her ; she was to blame for that as well as for the gloom she threw around her home. The top of the carriage was thrown back, and as he drove

along, he glanced at the fields, and being in an unusually sour mood, there was hardly one whose looks did not displease him. To think of Gratty putting that wet, swampy lot in winter wheat before draining! What could he expect but to have it froze out. And Dalton there to go and kill himself with that stone wall; never seen a well day since he laid it; of course he hadn't, and what was more, probably never would. And what under the sun put it into Grover's head to stick that big barn of his way off in the lot? Why didn't he have it somewhere in the neighborhood of the others? That man always went backward in everything he undertook. He could not go straight ahead, he must turn and twist; and the provoking thing was, he was always right and every body else wrong. He remembered having a talk with him about that very barn, and that was all the good it done. He believed if he had another one to build, he'd put it on the top of the hill, and then argue that it was easier to draw a full wagon up hill than an empty one down. And then that Cranson, what possessed him to cut that wood on the west part of his farm? Didn't he know it warded off the cold, bleak winds from the lake? and in so doing made his land more productive. If he didn't he soon would; he'd find the difference. He whipped up his horses and tossed back his head contemptuously. The way

those Actons managed since their father died ! it made him angry to see it ; the barn doors swinging, the fences all down, the gates crippled and useless and they driving fast horses and dashing out into all manner of extravagance. How did they suppose it was going to end. And Brown, there, to go and get his orchard grafted in that style, twenty or thirty grafts to every tree. A pretty sight it was now, stripped of every sizable branch, and little sticks pointing out in all directions. But they were sprouts of the rarest quality, and by-and-by every tree would be in itself an orchard in variety and quantity. He'd have more apples in that one orchard than he would have in twenty, as it was before. Yes, the grafters, with so much per graft, told him so, and like a fool in his greed he believed them. They had made their penny by it, and by-and-by he would see what he would make. It was astonishing people couldn't use a little common sense in such matters, and not allow themselves to be victimized by every cheat that came along. The state of the orchards back, should have taught him a lesson ; every third tree dying or dead—all grafted like his, and like his to do such wonders. In this grumbling, fault-finding humor he drove along on that beautiful spring morning. In vain the soft breeze fanned his cheek, that the blue sky, behind its thin curtain of light,

feathery clouds, smiled benignly upon him, that the fragrance of a thousand delicate flowers filled the air, that the grand old hills in the distance were clothed in the softest green, that thrift and abundance were all around him. He was not prepared to see it, his heart was bitter and only bitter feelings filled it. It was well he expended its bitterness on the fields he passed, for by the time he reached Livy and stood on the porch of the station-house, waiting for the train to come in, the cloud had passed from his deep eyes, and a kindly light beamed from them. All of a sudden a flush swept over his stern features, the train came thundering in, it paused, and almost the first persons he saw descending the platform were Mr. Kent and his daughter. He hastened to meet them, and warmly extending a hand to each, exclaimed :

“Thank God, you are safe back, thank God.” His voice was quick and tremulous. His gaze was for a moment rivetted on Mrs. Spafford’s pale, sunken face, and with a heavy sigh he turned to her father.

“Mrs. Spafford,” he said, “will need some rest and a cup of tea before starting for home.”

“Yes, Michael, you are right, she will. Here, Florence, my child, lean on me.” He wound his arm around her, and almost carried her into a

might have glided on; but he came as a black curse upon them. As the serpent entering the Garden and bringing sin and death in his train, so he entered that family and brought sorrow and desolation with him. His features became set, his eye hard and glazed; without stirring or moving a muscle, he sat stiff and erect in his chair. Mr. Kent laid his hand on his knee:

"You don't tell me," he gently remarked, "how Clara took the news of Florence's sickness."

Mr. Bryan started. "To be sure, to be sure," he hastily replied, in a fluttered manner, "I didn't tell you, but I never let her know till yesterday, when I got the news you were coming home. What was the use of worrying her about it?"

"True, Michael, true. But how did it affect her then?"

"Why, she turned as white as a sheet; but I brought the color back to her face by telling her the danger was all past, and that you and Mrs. Spafford would be home to-day. Oh, she was full of joy when she heard that, and showed it just like the child she is."

Mr. Kent was affected. Clara was his pearl above price, the light of his heart, the crowning blessing the good God had vouchsafed to his declining days. His eyes filled.

"She was glad her old father was coming home?"

"Glad, Mr. Kent! She was wild with the thought, she hardly knew what to say or how to act, and was like one beside herself with joy. I had to go with her and the girls to her oratory, and kneel down with them and return thanks to our dear Lord."

"God bless her. She knew to whom the thanks were due."

"She did, and faithfully has she prayed for you and Mrs. Spafford all the time you have been away."

"I know it, Michael. And she has been sorely troubled at our protracted stay. I could see it, although she bravely tried to hide it and write cheerfully and hopefully."

"Yes, she worried about it," Mr. Bryan admitted, "and grew pale and thin." Seeing the pained, concerned look of the father, he thoughtfully added: "But she'll get plump and fresh again, now that you are home." And then he ventured to remark, "If she had only known your business, and why the great lawyer Egan was with you, with that other gentleman, I don't think she would have been so worried. She feared—"

"Feared!" Mr. Kent, visibly agitated, exclaimed, "feared, Michael, what did she fear?"

"I hardly know; neither did she. But some terrible misgiving of coming sorrow haunted her. I mean," he added, looking ashamed and em-

barrassed, "I mean it might have haunted her. I am not certain it did ; but, but—oh, Mr. Kent, Catharine and I have been all of a tremble, and couldn't make out what it all meant, and feared everything, and been sick and wild when we thought of it, and thought of it all the time." It was out now and his deep eye quailed, and his strong heart beat and fluttered. He did not know what he would think, or how he would take his words. He might look upon them as intrusive and prying ; again they might tear open wounds that were hardly closed. It was some moments before Mr. Kent spoke, and then the tones of his voice were singularly calm and tranquil.

"Michael," he said, "I see how it was. My poor child missed her father, and was lone without him ; but the terrible and sickening fear that haunted you and Catharine did not come near her ?" He waited for a comment or answer, but getting none, mildly proceeded : "You and Catharine were sorely troubled, and looked ahead for something, you hardly knew what ; but whatever it was, something that would be a greater blight than any that had gone before."

" 'Tis God's truth, we did." His head was bent forward, and the words came in a hoarse whisper from his white lips, "That Egan being with you made it look dark to us."

"You knew his profession?"

"Yes, from the first I took him to be the great Rochester lawyer of that name; and afterwards Hascall told me he was the man, and the greatest criminal lawyer in the State."

Mr. Kent looked sharply at him, and Mr. Bryan saw a deathly pallor creep over his face. "What made him say that?" he asked, after a struggle for composure.

"I don't know. Catharine and I had our fears about it, and they were fears that almost shook our reason, but they were only fears, nothing certain, nothing plain, all dark before us."

Mr. Kent arose and slowly paced the room several times. Seating himself, he said:

"There was enough, Michael, to rouse yours and Catharine's suspicions. I know it as well as you, but in the midst of the darkest of them your friendship never failed. You did me a good service when you loaned me that two hundred and fifty dollars I wrote for the first time; and the second time called on you, you did not hold back."

"Hold back, Felix Kent! is that what you say to me? Wasn't Catharine and I glad that we had it to send to you? and didn't we know that only for you, under God, we wouldn't have had it to send? What was I, or what would I have been,

if the good God had not sent you as an angel of mercy to me ? You forget it, but we do not."

" And in my sorrow you remember it more keenly than ever before ?"

" That is the time to remember it, sir. We would be base and ungrateful to forget it then." There was a gentle dignity in his whole manner, a softness in his voice, a still, subdued expression on his stern features.

Mr. Kent leaned back in his chair. " Florence was very sick," he observed, as with seeming unconsciousness he gave a slight turn to the conversation. Bryan felt it. With his overflowing gratitude, his deep and unalterable affection, he could not trust him. Inwardly he writhed under it ; outwardly he was as calm as Mr. Kent.

" Did you have to call in a priest ? Was she anointed ?"

This was a home thrust, and, conscience-stricken, he lowered his head. This was not the way that noble man had behaved to him. How tender and delicate he was, how afraid of probing into his secrets, how generous and thoughtful. It came up like needles piercing his brain, how Mr. Kent once alighted at the door when sick and faint, and missing his accustomed stimulant, he was irritable and fault-finding, and saying everything hateful and taunting to poor Catharine he could think of ; and

it seemed the enemy of man gave him an extensive vocabulary of abuse to cull from, and what did he do? He blushed and looked pained and confused that he happened on them just then, because he felt in his great mercy that it would crush and humiliate them to the earth; and what did he say, when he did speak? why, that he was very well, but suffering from a severe cold which left him quite deaf. And then when Catharine, a little reassured by his friendly face and voice, told him she was sorry for his cold, but glad for his deafness, he answered, "Michael is weak now, Catharine, but bear with him a while, and by and by, with God's blessing, he will be stronger;" and afterwards, when in his shame and wrath at himself, he tried to apologize and make excuses, he insisted he had heard nothing. And now he meanly pried and put questions that brought the blood mantling his pale, care-worn cheeks, and tears to his holy eyes.

"No, Michael," Mr. Kent at length answered, "a priest was not called in. She was not prepared for death."

"I know how it was. It often is so," he hastened to say; "she was very sick, and suffered a great deal—any body to see her would know that—but still there was nothing about her that made you fear her death."

"Oh! but, Michael, there was."

"But she didn't know it, and couldn't be made to see her danger." He wanted to make it smooth and plain ; but instead of that he blunderingly made it harder and more difficult. A spasm passed over Mr. Kent's face. "Michael, have mercy," he entreated.

Mr. Bryan started up, and large drops stood on his brow. "Felix Kent," he exclaimed, in a husky voice, "strike me dead, but don't say that to me again. My God! have mercy on you!" His powerful frame trembled, and his breath was short and hurried.

"Calm yourself, Michael," Mr. Kent said, "I meant no harm, and you know it. You and yours have stood by me nobly, and may God bless you. I have not a doubt of your fidelity or your discretion ; but there are some things we cannot lay before our nearest or dearest friends ; we can only go to God and His blessed saints, with them, and therefore you must not be hurt if I cannot satisfy your just and natural curiosity."

Mr. Bryan grasped his hand. "I am not hurt ; I don't mind it. What you can't tell me, without pain to yourself, don't tell me at all ; I don't want to hear it and I won't." He looked gloomily out of the window. "Curiosity," he murmured, as if speaking to himself, "but that's a hard, unfeeling word. It wasn't curiosity, it was something more."

"Sympathy, Michael," Mr. Kent mildly responded.

"Yes, yes, that's it. Oh, what would I not give could I lift the weight from you, and drive the cloud from her. I would be willing to commence again as poor and friendless as when you first reached out your blessed hand to me. With industry and sobriety, even at my time of life, I could live, and that would be all I would ask."

"Michael, you cannot do it. All you are worth would be useless to affect it; by-and-by the good Lord will lift the burden from me and drive the cloud from her, and till then we must patiently wait and pray." There was a tone of earnest sincerity in his voice, and the fervid piety of Michael Bryan's nature was touched. He looked with reverence on that noble face; he saw the dark hair bleached, the majestic form bowed, and yet no bitter word escaped his lips, no murmuring thought disturbed the great serenity of his soul. Cares and sorrows were upon him, and he bore them as a Christian should; with patience and meekness before God, and gentle dignity and mildness before man.

"'Tis a fine day," he remarked, looking out of the window at the background of hills and up at the tranquil sky. "The earth looks fresh and young in her spring dress,"

The conversation was changed, and Bryan felt relieved. Now was not the time to clear up the mystery hanging round that poor, stricken widow, perhaps it never would be cleared, that it would envelope her like a dark cloud till she was laid in the grave, and even then round her memory cast its sombre shadow.

"Yes, yes," he agreed, "'tis a fine day. Just the day for ploughing, dry and sunny, with a bit of coolness in the air. The horses won't tire and steam to-day."

"I suppose you farmers are all busy with your spring's work?"

"Yes, sir, all driving and hurrying to get in their crops. Andrew has put in the barley and oats for you, and now he's at the corn ground, getting it ready to plant next week."

A knock was heard, a chamber maid came in. "The lady below is ready to go," were the words she said. Mr. Kent and Mr. Bryan rose. "Poor Clara," observed Mr. Kent, descending the stairs, "her eyes will be sore looking for us."

He glanced at his watch. "What time is it?" Mr. Bryan asked.

"Quarter to twelve."

"Then she will not expect us for two hours yet."

"She knew what train I would come on?"

"Yes, but I told her her sister would probably

have to rest a while in the village, and she need not expect us till between one and two o'clock. I didn't want her to be straining the eyes out of her head looking for us."

"You were thoughtful, Michael."

"Bless you, I know a little what this looking for coming friends is." He stepped out and soon brought the carriage round to the door. Mrs. Spafford was ready, and like a child he carried her in his strong arms, and lifted her tenderly into it. She occupied the whole of the back seat. The top thrown back, her father's shawl carefully wrapped round her, and partly sitting, partly reclining, she was as comfortable as the circumstances would admit. Mr. Kent seated himself beside Mr. Bryan, (his big travelling trunk was left at the station-house to be sent for the next day,) and with a quick but easy pace they started for Tasso. It was well they had no high hills to mount or descend, that the road was smooth, and the distance not far, only a few miles; more than once they had to pause to let the poor invalid breathe and rest. It was one o'clock when they stopped before Mr. Kent's residence. The sitting-room door was open, and Clara came running wildly out.

"My father, my own father, my blessed, blessed father," she exclaimed, reaching out her arms to

him. He alighted and she wept and sobbed on his shoulder.

"God bless you, my darling, God bless you!" he said, drawing her to his heart.

"Home will be home again, now that my dear, dear father is come," she cried. "Oh, I have been so lone, and the house has been so empty."

Mr. Bryan, giving the lines to Andrew, helped Mrs. Spafford out and carried her into the house. Clara flew to remove her wrappings, and fondly kissed her pallid cheek. "Poor, poor Florence," she sobbed, as with nervous fingers she drew off her gloves and loosened her bonnet; "how much you have suffered, and I knew nothing of it. Mr. Bryan never let me know it till yesterday, and then he told me you were better, and you and father would be home. Oh, wasn't I glad to hear that?"

"Home," the poor, sad woman repeated, while tears filled her sunken eyes.

"But you are pleased to see it again?"

"Yes, my child, pleased to see it, and grateful that I have it to turn to. Home! oh, there is a heavenly melody in the word. Only the lone and desolate know its full meaning."

"There, I won't take off your shawl yet awhile, not till you get used to the air of the room; but you must lie down and rest till the dinner is ready. Mr. Bryan said you would not be here till half past

one or two o'clock, and I was timing the meal to half past one, so as to have it just right." It was on the lounge Mr. Bryan had seated her, and now placing a pillow under her head, and throwing a light quilt over her, she hastened to make apologies to her father why the meal was not quite ready.

"Never mind, my darling, I am in no need of it ; it will be soon enough."

Annie and Kittie, busy in the kitchen, had not yet made their appearance ; but they now came in, and Mr. Kent warmly shook hands with them, and thanked them for their kindness in staying with Clara during his absence. They blushing assured him it was a great pleasure to them to be with her ; and Kittie, with the strictest regard for the truth, added that her society was so instructive, and they had learned so much from her, that they, not she, were the debtors. Mr. Kent laid his hand with fatherly affection on her curly head, and remarked he had no doubt she too had learned many a good and useful lesson from them. Clara hearing the remark as she was setting the table, answered she had ; that they had taught her several new stitches in tatting, and how to make floating island, frosting for cake, and a new kind of yeast for bread, besides several other very important matters in the house-keeping line. Mr. Kent and Mr. Bryan both smiled. The benefit had been mutual, that was

evident. Clara, in her eager, trembling joyousness passing in and out of the room, had a hundred questions to ask, and hardly waiting an answer to one of them, broke in with a hundred bits of news. She had so much to say, and it all rushed upon her with such force that the consequence was, she flitted from subject to subject with meteoric haste. Florence, lying on the lounge, watched her rapid movements, and listened with a pleased, interested look on her weary face, to her voluble tongue. Now and then she sighed heavily, and a cloud darkened her brow.

"Are you in pain?" Annie, noticing the changes of her countenance, softly and kindly asked.

"No, my dear," she coldly answered, without taking her eyes from her sister.

The meal ready, a great arm-chair from the study was wheeled up to the table, and she was helped to it. She was able to eat the toast and taste the peach preserves Clara placed before her; a good cup of tea refreshed her, and she looked on with a certain air of complacency over her grave features at the full justice others were doing to the excellent viands Clara and the girls had prepared with such loving care and forethought. The meal over, she again moved to the lounge, and Mr. Kent requested Mr. Bryan's presence in the study. There he took a draft for four hundred and fifty dollars,

from his pocket-book, and handed it to Mr. Bryan. "Here, Michael," he said, "is the money I owe you, and most sincerely do I thank you for your kindness in loaning it to me in my time of need."

Mr. Bryan was amazed; he could hardly speak. "I didn't expect it," he at length stammered, his hands glued to the back of the chair against which he leaned.

"No, not just now. But I am glad I am able to pay you. I would have given it to you at the railroad house, but I thought it better to wait till I got home. You see I am getting timid and foolish in my old age. Ugly stories of peering eyes and Argus-like ears, and imprudent travellers, and terrible catastrophies come up to me now and then." He smiled his kind and genial smile, and Bryan in wonderment looked at him. Could Kittie have been right in her supposition that their journey west was to get back a part of their former wealth? Before he could solve this question, silently put to himself, Mr. Kent's voice again sounded.

"Why, Michael, why don't you take it?"

"Because I don't want it; I can easily wait."

"I know it, but I can pay it now, and I wish you to take it. It will remove a burden from my mind. I feel just as grateful as if I had the use of it for years." Mr. Bryan accepted it and with vacant stare and trembling fingers placed it in his pocket-book.

Annie remained with Clara ; Kittie accompanied her father home. On the way he was unusually silent ; she could not get a word from him. He kept thinking of Felix Kent's sudden and unexpected payment. The question that he asked himself in the study was now answered. No, no, that was not the cause of their journey. If it had been, Mr. Kent would have told him all about it ; there would have been nothing in that to hide ; nothing that would have brought that look of agony to his noble face when he so piteously entreated him to have mercy on him. But how or in what way did he get the means ? He knew he had none he could turn to, that he drew the last dollar he had in the bank before starting, and then he sent to him for more. If he had had of his own, he would not have done this. With all his humility he was very spirited in such matters, and it must have cost him a severe struggle to call even on him in his need. Leo was not able to furnish it for him, for instead of earning, he was still under expense in that Medical school he was attending. Mrs. Spafford had nothing. Had he borrowed it from some other friend to pay him ? No, for that would have put him to the pain of exposing his want to that other, and he would feel he might as well owe him as any one else. Then, how was it ? how did he get it, and where did it come from ? He puz-

zled his brain to find answers to these questions ; but the more he pondered them, the more hazy and mysterious they grew.

CHAPTER XV.

JEROME and Christine Hascall were again at home. The business that called the one to Washington was happily attended to, and the health of the other was greatly benefited by the pleasant change. The interest they had evinced for the Kents was revived, Mr. Hascall himself being the most active and forward in the matter. He expressed to Bryan and others the liveliest sympathy for the poor, sad woman, so desolate in her loneliness ; he insisted that something must be done to cheer her up ; he called two or three times at the house, and although he did not see her, as she was in her room, and would not come down—was too feeble, as Clara reported—he talked with Clara and her father, and tired the former almost to death with his interminable prosing. She wondered how one could say any thing, and say it in so lifeless a manner ; why, if they must talk, they could not throw a little more vivacity over themselves and their remarks. One day that he called he brought

a volume, carefully wrapped up, under his arm. He asked for Mr. Kent; he was down to the village. He would like to see Mrs. Spafford. She was in her room, and not able to descend to the sitting-room. Then he would deliver his errand to Miss Kent.

"Would he be seated," Clara asked, bringing her father's great arm-chair up to the window.

"Yes, I will sit down," he said, softly sinking into it. "I have brought a work for your sister. I think it is one that will interest her," he continued, taking out his penknife and cutting the cord tying the two or three layers of paper bound round it.

"There," he said, when at last the volume was reached, "is the *Life of St. Monica*: I think, in fact, Miss Kent, there is no doubt of it, your sister will like it."

Clara with difficulty repressed a smile. "Thank you, Mr. Hascall," she returned, "but we have the *Life of St. Monica*, and Florence has read it time and again. Her whole life has been an endeavor to copy after her patience and meekness."

Mr. Hascall had not his newspaper in his hand to read from, and he was ill at ease for an answer. Looking out of the window, and directing his eyes to the far off hills around whose summits the great clouds seemed to nestle lovingly, he slowly and hesitatingly remarked:

"In some things her lot in life has been like that great saint ; in others it has been——" He paused, run his fingers through his hair, and looked sharper and with more intentness at the hills.

Clara colored. "My sister," she said, with some of the gentle dignity of her father, "has seen a great deal of sorrow, and her health has given way under it. But I am sure—for the God who hears and answers prayer, will not turn a deaf ear to my pleadings—that the peace and comfort of a loving and resigned heart will yet be hers. Just at present she is bitter, but the bitterness will pass, and strength and usefulness will take its place." Mr. Hascall had removed his eyes from the hills, and now they were bent respectfully upon her.

"I don't doubt it ; Oh, Miss Kent, I don't doubt it," he exclaimed, with more warmth than she thought him capable of ; "Your sister has been sorely tried, and is now sick and suffering ; if we could only rouse her up."

"We," Clara wonderingly repeated.

"Yes, we," he emphatically returned, "we. You and your father have nobly done your duty, but I feel as if the same could not be said of others."

"You don't mean the Bryans."

"Certainly not ; I mean myself, my family."

"Why what could you have done, or what was there for you to do?"

"I am going to show you. Mrs. Spafford shall know there are those who feel for her sorrow, who entertain for her the kindest sentiments, who would be proud of her friendship, and look upon her presence among them as an especial favor."

Clara's eyes filled. She felt she had been unjust in her aversion for him, and uncharitable in her remarks to the Bryan girls about his dull, stupid ways. Under his phlegmatic exterior was a truly kind and Christian heart.

"Your sister can walk round her room," he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"She sits up all the time?"

"No, sir ; she lies down several times during the day."

"She does not descend to her meals?"

"Yes, sir, she does. I would carry them up to her but she will not let me. She says the exertion of coming down to them, although it tires her some, does her good."

"You dine at one?"

"Yes, sir."

"She does not immediately go back to her room?"

"No, sir, she stays down with us, father and I, till two ; may be a little later."

"Very well, if to-morrow is a fine, sunny day like

to-day, Mrs. Hascall and I will call for her at two, and take her out for a short ride, a mile or two."

"You are very kind, but I don't know how father would feel about it. I mean," she said, quickly correcting herself, "I do know how he would feel. He would feel as if he ought to take her out riding if she is able to undergo the fatigue, and not leave it to strangers."

"Strangers, Miss Kent, is not the right word to use. Remember, we are neighbors and friends. But as to your father's views on the subject, set your mind at ease. I have talked the matter over with him; and he owned he would in the same case do as much for me or mine, and agreed to all I said."

"Indeed he would," she exclaimed, a fine glow suffusing her whole face; "there never, sir, was a kinder, better man. He is a perfect Christian, is my dear, dear father." Her voice was slightly tremulous, and tears dimmed her eyes.

"Yes, Miss Kent," Mr. Hascall readily assented, "you have a noble father." Then he sunk back to his old dull way, softly drummed with his fingers on the window-sill, looked at the background of nearer hills, and raised his eyes to those farther off, remarked something about the village being protected from the sweeping winds of winter, of the pleasant creek running through the east side, of

the mill and factory privileges it afforded; and finally, having exhausted every thing he had to say, slowly and stiffly rose.

"You do not care for the book," he said, taking it up.

"It is a later edition than ours, and if you please to leave it I would be glad. Father, I know, would like to look over it."

"And you," he mechanically observed.

"Oh, there's not a doubt but I shall make myself well acquainted with everything in it. There's not a book comes into the house that I do not have a fingering of."

"I am glad to hear it. I will leave it. Miss Kent, I bid you good afternoon." He made her a formal bow, took up his hat, and walked to the door. She watched him going down to the gate, and remorsefully thought how all his ways had grated on her, and how unjust was her dislike to him. He could not be like her stately father or the warm-hearted, impulsive Bryan; but still there were worth and goodness in him. And he was not half so stupid as she thought him; he knew how lone and depressed her poor sister was, and what would be beneficial to her, and how generously he was going to act upon it. He was none of those wordy philosophers, sporting a mantle of universal benevolence, and pointing to others what to do,

and pretty careful to do nothing themselves. They seem satisfied that they know what to do, and that the mere knowing without the doing is all sufficient for them. And they are called benevolent, broad-minded, great-hearted, whole-souled. They are looked upon as weeping spirits of compassion, ready to clasp the whole world in a fraternal embrace, and to banish wretchedness and sorrow from the face of the earth, and make of it an elysium abode; and because it's not done, and somebody else can't do it for them, there is any amount of sympathy, mingled with a good share of admiration, expended for their unbounded intelligence and vast and comprehensive, though extremely useless, benevolence. Hascall was not one of them. Walking stiffly and awkwardly down the street, his head a little forward, his hands hanging like plumbets from each shoulder, his eyes bent on the ground, no one for a moment would suppose him capable of getting up a warm enthusiasm about any of the many subjects that engross the thoughts of those highly gifted beings, the philosophers and reformers on paper of the day. He never reached after impossibilities, and, despising the things he might do, only groaned over the limited power entrusted to him. An earnest member of a church, whose numerous charitable and educational establishments have done and are still doing so much

to relieve distress and improve society, he delighted to feel, in his small, humble way, that he could do some good. Endowed with ample means, his manner of doing his small, humble good turns—for small and humble and of no moment whatever he seemed to think them—was such as never to impress one with a sense of dependence, or an idea of inferiority. Satisfied to do what he individually could, he left it to others to do the same. All Utopian plans for universal amelioration were to him simply ridiculous. He never said it, for he was not one to commit himself on any question; but his vacant air, when the subject was broached in his presence, the profound attention he paid just then to his paper, and the silent shrug of his shoulder, proclaimed it. On one occasion, however, he did express himself, but whether it was a real wish or only a dissenting opinion delivered in his own peculiar way, it is impossible to say. Some gentlemen at his house one day, after dinner, were speaking of the brilliant articles certain benevolent philosophers had written about the vast amount of misery in the world, and how it might and should be remedied. First, there was to be a general upheaving of society, the high were to be brought low, the low raised; there was to be no such thing as wealth, every body was to have enough, nobody too much, intellect the only standard of superiority.

no charitable institutions, for there would be no poor to need them, no hospitals or physicians ; for the laws of health, strictly followed, there would be no sickness, no prisons, for the temptation to sin removed, there would be no offenders to punish. "Upset the present state of the world and introduce a new order of things ! I would like to see them do it ;" Mr. Hascall, in his precise, abstracted way remarked ; and whether, as I said^{ed} before, it was expressing a wish or delivering an opinion, it was hard to say. A turn in the street took him from sight, and with a genuine feeling of respect, Clara retired from the window. She glanced at the clock ; she had two hours at her disposal before tea, and ascended to her room, seated herself at her desk, and drew out several sheets of paper closely written over. Since her father and Mrs. Spafford's return, and Annie Bryan's leaving, she had found time, with her other duties, to write a new article. It was entitled, "Proofs that the Aborigines of America were Descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel." She brought a deal of learning and research to bear upon the subject, had even gone beyond her most sanguine expectations in the authority she had gathered together to strengthen her assertions, and looked upon it as a perfect success. She had not yet read a word of it to her father, but meant to astonish him when she

did. 'Tis true, he found her on several occasions "in the study," poring over Josephus' History of the Jews, Russel's Palestine and Crichton's Ancient and Modern Arabia, Adair's, Hawkins', Thatcher's and Schoolcraft's writings on the American Indian, and that she had several conversations with him, in which the Indians, their government, division into tribes, worship, ideas of a future state, rewards and punishment, characteristic eloquence, ways and habits, were particularly dwelt upon ; so, knowing she was again writing, he might easily conjecture what her subject was. As to Jerome Hascall and his sister, when they called, as they did two or three times a week, she was very careful to let the poor Indian rest, and only once or twice referred to them, and then in an indifferent manner, and quickly flitted from them to something else—his trip to Washington, the gay society of the Capital, or Christine's visit to her aunt, and the glimpse of fashionable life she there had. Jerome was so agreeable that her favorable opinion of him was considerably strengthened. He certainly possessed the power of appreciating talents in others, and whether his own were of a high order or not, she did not pause to determine. It seemed, however, without giving the important matter very serious reflection, that she had, almost unconsciously to herself, decided in his favor. She wanted so much in her heart to know

his opinion of several of her late articles. Some way or other they did not exactly please her. Her father, on hearing them, had said, "Very good, my child, very good," but she began to mistrust his judgment, or rather to look upon it as a judgment pronounced upon what he considered a child's production, and of course very different from what it would have been upon the productions of mature years. And she was not a child, she was a woman, with a woman's wisdom and experience. She had been delighted with them when they first appeared in black and white before her; but now, on going to them after a few weeks, they struck her as wrong somewhere, she could not exactly tell where. Sometimes it was the style, next the matter, and again the whole affair, style, matter and all, annoyed her. As to going to the Bryan girls, that was out of the question. They had not given such grave studies the care and attention necessary to enable them to form a correct estimate of her labors, or know whether she had treated her subject with skill or not. She thought it different with young Hascall; she had purposely introduced those topics, upon which she had written, into her conversation with him, and she was delighted to find they were topics on which he had studied and reflected a great deal. His remarks showed it, and the preference he evinced for them proved he was not the empty-headed, vacant idler

she had once supposed him to be. But still she was not certain about appealing to his judgment ; favorably impressed as she at present was with him, she could not entirely get over the mortification she experienced when she encountered that something like amusement at her expense glittered in his eyes. It disagreeably reminded her of her brother Leo's foolish and inconsiderate remarks, when, trying to be humorous, he only succeeded in being miserably stupid. But after all, he was a dear, good brother, and had such a kind, tender affection for her ! How feeling he was to her since the reverse came upon them, how thoughtful for her comfort, what noble encouraging letters he wrote her, so cheerful and pleasant, with an undertone of the deepest and most earnest piety ; how interested in everything that interested her. God bless him ! She did love him if he did laugh at her in the olden time ; he couldn't help it, it was only the levity of youth. He wouldn't laugh now. If he really thought her articles had worth, he would candidly tell her so and rejoice in it ; if they had not, he would carefully, so as not to wound her feelings, point out their defects. Just before leaving home he had detected her mistake in treating, or trying to treat, of psychological subjects, and although she felt a little irritated at the time, the irritation passed away, and only a grateful remembrance remained.

She would wait till he got home ; he was the one for her to go to, and she would go to him, she would lay the matter before him and abide by his decision. Thank God ! she had a kind, sensible brother to go to in her trouble. She put the paper back in her drawer ; she did not feel like writing that afternoon, and, rising, went to Mrs. Spafford's room. She was in her rocking-chair, at the open window, sewing. Clara drew up a low stool and seated herself at her feet. She said nothing, but with her elbows on her knees and her chin in her palms, watched with a sort of vacant earnestness the slow, uncertain movements of her hand. What a contrast between the two sisters !—one young, hopeful and courageous, the rich, dark hair drawn smoothly back from the blue-veined temples, the broad brow unwrinkled, the large grey eyes bright and searching, the delicately rounded cheeks, though pale, clear, the red lips gently parted in her silent gaze ; the other prematurely old, her once dark hair freely dashed with white, her forehead deeply lined, her eyes dull and faded, her cheeks thin and sunken, her complexion ashen-hued, as if the mold of the grave was upon it. What made the wondrous contrast between them ? Age should not have done it ; her superior years should have sat lightly and gracefully upon her ; and for the youth and freshness of the one should have been

the mellow wisdom and matronly dignity of the other ; then, though years intervened in their ages, there would have been no striking and painful disparagement. What the elder sister had lost would have been fully made up by what she had gained, a larger experience of life, clearer and more correct judgment, and a certain authority which years alone give, and over which they invariably throw a halo of respect. What tore from her the rights of her years ? Was it remorse for unexpiated sin in her darkened past ? Was the heavy, crushing hand of pitiless despair bowing her down ? or had the spring of her life been broken by long and hopeless suffering ?

Gradually, as Clara sat watching her, the haggard, drawn look of pain settled on her face.

“ Florence, don’t sew any more. You don’t look able.”

Apparently the remark fell on deaf ears ; no notice was taken of it. Again she spoke, and this time there was an asperity in her voice. “ Florence, you are a mother ; you want your children to mind you ; then why don’t you mind father ? ”

Now she looked up. “ It don’t hurt me,” she answered, in the low, subdued tone of sorrow.

“ But your face twitches, and large drops are on your forehead. You are overdoing, and you don’t know it. Put by your sewing ; put it by this

minute. Father emphatically said you were to do nothing to tire you." The invalid folded it up, and laid it on the stand with a heart-broken submissiveness. Clara took her pale, skeleton-like hands in her plump little ones, and pressed them lovingly to her cheek.

"Oh, Florence," she said, "if you would only talk to me and be yourself again. You don't know how your gloom crushes me."

Mrs. Spafford started like one roused from a painful dream. "Crushes you?" she asked, "is that what you said?"

"Yes, and it does, and father too. Can't you see it? How white his hair is growing, and how feeble and old he looks." Clara had released her hands, and covering her face with them, she bowed her head upon the stand.

"Oh, Clara I wish I could. I wish the world of sunshine without could once more penetrate the cold, dark recess of my heart. But it can't; it never will."

"Don't say that, Florence, it can and will. Our dear Lord, in His own good time, will drive the cloud away, and then His glorious sunshine will stream in upon your poor, cold heart."

She raised her head, and looked into the beaming face beside her, "You believe it?" she incredulously said.

"I do, Florence, I firmly believe it, I daily pray for it, and God will not turn a deaf ear to my prayer ; sooner or later He will answer me."

Mrs. Spafford's head was resting on her hand ; her eyes, averted from Clara, were cast down, a shudder ran through her whole frame. "Once my faith was as strong," she said, as if speaking to herself.

"Oh, Florence," Clara sharply exclaimed, the quick tears starting, "is this the cursed legacy Homer Spafford, with his black infidel heart, left you? Spurn it, tear it out from your soul and brain, and trampling it under your feet, return to your early Faith. Return, O Florence," she entreated, "and share again its heavenly peace and rest."

Mrs. Spafford feebly rose. "I hear father's step in the study," she said.

"Oh, Florence," Clara groaned, unheeding her attempt at evasion, "does he know it?"

"Who?"

"Father?"

"Know what?" she asked with sternness.

"That Spafford's cursed unbelief has overshadowed you, and that you no longer cling to the Holy Faith of your childhood?"

Mrs. Spafford again sank into her chair. "Clara," she said, in as calm a tone as the agitation of her

feelings would allow, "when I remarked my faith was once so strong, you misunderstood me!"

"I did not take the right meaning of your words?"

"No."

"Thank God. You have lifted a load from my heart. Oh, what is all the happiness of the world—its wealth, and grandeur, its friends, its successes, its ease, its pleasures, without the love and fear of God in our hearts? Time flies; they pass, and the grave covers them up. What are they all to the rich and prosperous of one hundred years ago? What in one hundred years to come will they be to the rich and prosperous of to-day? Nothing, or worse than nothing. As to its partings, its sorrows, its reverses, its pains, its poverty, its blighted hopes and crushing disappointments, what, too, are they? As the one so the other passes, the world rolls on and they are lost to sight. What do our blessed books, the writings of the saints and fathers of the Church, teach us? that there is something in the latter beside the mere passing, that these sorrows and trials, borne in the right spirit, that is, with patience and resignation, lead us nearer and nearer to God, and make us dearer and more precious in His sight." She paused, and Mrs. Spafford meekly and touchingly said, "Go on, Clara, your voice is to

me like the harp of David when he played before Saul."

"I could say a great deal on this subject, Florence, and not half exhaust it, but I see by the clock on your mantel-piece that it is time for me to get the tea; however, I will just quote one verse from some beautiful lines Annie Bryan cut from their newspaper and sent to me yesterday. They are headed, 'The Way of the Cross,' and signed 'Agnes;' after tea I will give them to you, and you can read them over at your leisure. They are all very beautiful and go direct to the heart, but the verse that struck me the most was this:

'Our crosses are blessings in mercy given,
Guide-posts between our earth and heaven;
And as we meet them with cheerfulness,
Each new cross makes the distance less.'

That has been ringing in my head all day, and it brings with it a strange sweetness. They are now on the study room table. I put them there where father would see them; for I know they will greatly please him."

"And I too would like to read the whole of them."

"And you shall. You will find them peculiarly applicable to your case. But I must go now."

She rose, paused a moment to press her lips on her invalid sister's cheek, and left the room. The next day after dinner, according to appointment,

Mr. and Mrs. Hascall called for Mrs. Spafford to take her out riding. She seemed frightened, drew back, and declared she could not think of it; but Clara put on her shawl and bonnet, and Mr. Hascall, totally oblivious of her remonstrances, led, or more properly speaking, carried her to the carriage, and carefully seated her in it; Mrs. Hascall seated herself beside her, and Mr. Hascall saying, "certainly, a sick person's feelings should never be crossed; we should do just as they say, for they know best," entered and quietly drove off. Clara and her father watched them drive down to the gate, and pass up the street leading to the church; then they went, the one into the study, the other into the kitchen, to clear away the dinner dishes. All the time they both thought with gratitude of the kindness shown them.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE friendship between the Kents and Hascalls continued to increase. Clara talked a great deal of Mrs. Hascall and Christine's kindly interest in her poor, sick sister, and Mr. Hascall's unassuming goodness. She felt she could not speak too strongly of it to the Bryans, seeing she had so often referred to him and his wooden ways in such a dis-

paraging manner. The Bryans were delighted, and yet Mr. and Mrs. Bryan were more and more puzzled. It was a bright, sunny morning, Annie and Kittie were busy, the one making beds, sweeping and dusting, the other washing the breakfast dishes, and cleaning the vegetables for dinner. Mrs. Bryan was in her cool, fragrant dairy, working and packing down butter ; Mr. Bryan had been seeing to some fences unruly cattle had knocked down, and his hands in the meadow were making great progress with their mowing machines ; by noon they would have the grass all in swarths, and the next day they would have it in the barns. He was getting along famously with his work, and felt he might afford himself a breathing moment after his morning's hurry and drive, and the aggravation he had gone through. To think of Sanford's cows breaking over that staked fence, and tearing through that barley field, as they did ! And Sanford insisted they were not unruly, the most quiet drove in the world, wouldn't step over a rail a foot high ; it was Bryan himself that was to blame with his rotten, ricketty, tumble-down fence it was enough to make the stupidest beast long to try its pushing and jumping powers, just to look at it. That was what he had the assurance to say when he went over and told him he must poke that big red and fair of his. The fence was now solid, and so

good as it could be made, and the next time they broke over he would just drive them into the cow yard, and not let them out till Sanford took out his pocket-book and handed him a bill or two. He'd teach him how to trespass on his neighbor and make himself the innocent one all the time. He felt relieved when he made this terrible threat; but Mrs. Bryan, working away at her butter, had not the slightest fear that it would be put into execution. She had heard him declare the same a hundred times, and that was all that came of it. It seemed, with his passionate temper, if he had not the comfort of this threat he would have suffered an instantaneous explosion; it acted as an escape valve, to let the superabundant steam off. So without crossing him, or begging him to do nothing, he would afterwards be ashamed of, in her perfect security on that score, she soothed him, said it was enough to try the patience of any man, and that Sanford ought to know better.

"And do better, too, Catharine," he sternly remarked.

"Of course, Michael; but I suppose he's greatly drove just now."

"Drove or not drove, I'll not stand it. If he is drove so am I. I can't afford to be running after his cattle, and putting up fences for them to knock down, and I won't. I'll just give him a lesson, see

if I don't." He walked to the door, and looked out on the green fields, thought how much they were like to yield to the acre, and what work and care there were in them before their crops would be safe in the barn, and once there, thrashed, cleaned and carried to market; of the money they would bring, and the changes and improvements he would make, that it would be absolutely necessary to make. He had got considerably along in the enlargement of his north barn, and was raising the south one so as to have another floor to it, when Mrs. Bryan, through with packing down, and taking the fresh butter from the churn, said:

"But the Kents, Michael, I can't help thinking about them."

"Oh," he answered, plucking a stem from a rose bush growing near the door, and carelessly twirling it in his fingers, "I can breathe about them now, the Hascalls are getting very thick with them, and whatever it was, you may be sure old Hascall, once on the scent, has found it out, and sees nothing in her to blame."

"But, Michael, what did it mean, Mr. Kent, begging you that day to have mercy on him?"

"I don't know, Catharine." He had now sat down again, and threw the stem he held in his hands out of the window. "It was strange," he said, "I've often thought of it, and cannot make

it out. If all was fair and smooth for her I don't know why he would want to hide it from me."

"And Clara, Michael, having a hired girl, and getting back her old piano, and the beautiful iron fence they are putting up, I tell you it looks as if their journey west meant something."

"It does so," Mr. Bryan thoughtfully returned, "but why he should be so close about it, I can't see."

"Spafford may have had some speculation on hand that, contrary to expectation, has turned out well, but if so, why hide it?"

"That's it, Catharine, why hide it?"

"Unless it was for fear some of the creditors might bring in their claims, Michael."

"Nonsense, Catharine. The very thought of that would have made Felix Kent *afraid* to hide it. As dishonest as Spafford was, he was and is the soul of honor. Do you think he could use or enjoy what rightfully belonged to another? No. If there had been any thing for the creditors, he would have shared it down to the last penny with them."

"But, Michael, you forget there was no one who lost so much as he did. And whatever it was, Egan, thinking it justly belonged of right to him, might have prevailed on him to be silent about it and keep it for his own use."

"No, Catharine, I say no; fifty Egans wouldn't

have persuaded him to do a thing that wouldn't bear the strongest light upon it. I know the man. His conscience is not made up with the say of others; there's nothing worldly about him. He may have been the heaviest loser by Spafford, but that wouldn't justify him in the sight of God in secretly appropriating to himself any gain coming from some forlorn speculation of Spafford, and no one knows that better than he."

"But what in the name of God could it have been, Michael."

"It's hard to tell. One thing is certain, it was no speculation of Spafford's took them to the west."

"But where could he have got the means to pay you so promptly, and now to put up those improvements. You know he had none of the Grattan stock of money left."

"Yes, I know, and sometimes it has struck me that he has got it from some able friend as a present, in gratitude for his kindness to them in some pinch. God knows if I thought he would have accepted it, I would have made a present of what I loaned him without a murmur, and I am none too well off."

"But you thought he wouldn't accept it."

"I did, and more than that, would be offended at the affair."

"And he would, Michael, you may depend on that. He's delicate about such things."

"But why wouldn't he accept from me as well as from some one else? Who owes him more, or would be prouder to do him a good turn?"

"But he's not accepted from any one else. That's not the way the means have come to him."

"No, Catharine, it wasn't. I know it as well as you; sometimes I've thought it, but it was only when I got bewildered about it. Coming back to common sense, I've seen the folly of it. Felix Kent would be too proud to accept of any man's bounty. He was a good friend to me in my need; I would do any thing on earth for him, and he knows it, but he wouldn't take of my money."

"No, nor he wouldn't confide in you his trouble." There was a sharp reproachful ring in Mrs. Bryan's voice, and a spark in her deep blue eye.

"But, Catharine," Mr. Bryan returned, "it was not because he could not trust me; but, as I told you before, he said there were some things we could only go to God and his blessed saints with, and his trouble seemed in fact to be one of them."

"The Lord save us, Michael, to think there was no priest sent for, and she so sick in such danger."

"It is dark, Catharine, dark," he hitched about in his chair, and again let his eye wander to the fields; but this time it was not to note their crops and calculate the profits.

"She has certainly grown stronger and look-

better since she got home. Her daily rides **have** done her a great deal of good; she now rides five miles without getting tired, and goes about the house and in the garden, and yet she never goes to church and is as cold and queer as ever. I don't know what to think of it. If there was nothing in the past hanging over her, why should that be?"

"If there was or wasn't, why should it be, Michael? The church never closes its doors to the penitent, let their crimes be what they might. The prayer of an humble, contrite heart is sure to be heard."

"True, Catharine, but may be she don't feel it. Homer Spafford was a black-hearted infidel, and as much sorrow as she saw with him, may be his constant sneers and taunts and shallow arguings, confused and upset her about her religion, and that's the reason she don't go to church or approach the sacraments."

Mrs. Bryan hastily blessed herself. "The Lord forbid," she exclaimed. "Oh, it can't be," she added, after a moment's absence in the kitchen for hot water to wash her churn, butter-bowl and ladle, "you remember how Annie saw her praying and crying that night at the foot of her bed?"

"Yes, I do," he meditatively answered. Then withdrawing his eyes from the fields, and looking at his wife with more animation, he said, "That, Cath-

arine, was only another of my foolish thoughts; but no, she has not, thank God, turned from her holy Faith. She believes it still as strong as you or I."

"But she don't practice it, Michael."

"I know it," he sadly answered.

"And what is faith without practice worth? Precious little, let me tell you, in the sight of God." Mrs. Bryan was now giving the last touch of cleanliness to the dairy, and casting a searching glance round the room and down the long rows of pans resting on the racks near the wall, she turned to Mr. Bryan, and said:

"Come, Michael, I am going now and I want to close the door; the sun will soon be coming in." Mr. Bryan rose and took up his hat.

"Well, I'm rested now," he remarked, "I'll go to the meadow and help them spread the hay." He passed down the back yard while Mrs. Bryan hastened to the kitchen to see how the girls were getting along with the dinner. She knew the men would be tired and hungry, and want their meal to the very minute.

As Mrs. Bryan said, there were some changes at the Kents. A girl was employed to help Clara and take the burden from her, her old piano restored to her was standing in the sitting room, and to please her father she daily played several of his

favorite airs. The old straggling fence that had annoyed her so much at the first glance, was removed, and tasteful iron palings were taking its place. A number of shade trees had been planted round the house, and a little flower garden laid out. A neatly gravelled path, bordered with delicate shrubs, led down to the gate. Mrs. Spafford's health was much improved. Her daily rides seemed to have a most beneficial effect in restoring her strength ; but they failed to bring any buoyancy to her spirits or to lift the dreadful gloom that oppressed her. She was still as silent and uncompanionable as ever. Clara had visited once or twice at the Hascalls, and two or three times a week Christine brought or sent her beautiful flowers to deck her Madonna. The girl in the kitchen helped her so much that she had a great deal more leisure to attend to her writing, and had now two new articles, and carefully reviewed several of her old ones. To her friends, the Hascalls and Bryans, except to Annie and Kittie, and of late not even to them, she never mentioned her writings ; she preferred to wait till they should hear of them from other sources, but this did not leave her without a subject ; she had her favorite authors to dwell upon. She never spoke of them as past and gone, their eyes closed, their hands crossed on pulseless breasts, their labor done. They were her friends,

her particular friends, whose presence cheered, whose voice charmed.

“I do love Fenelon every day of my life more and more,” she would say; “there is something so mild and saintly about him. I believe it would be utterly impossible for him under the greatest aggravation to speak a rude or unkind word. Oh, he is one that you cannot help admiring. Under the most adverse circumstances his patience and sweetness never forsake him. When he was in error about those writings on Quietism, how much nobility of heart and brain he showed in destroying them and striving to do away with any bad impression against faith they might occasion. How much greater in his humility and touching gentleness he is than the harsh censors who so unmercifully poured upon his devoted head the vials of their wrath. The blessed Pontiff knew his son, and like a father treated him with all mildness, but how cruel and vindictive was the proud imperious Bossuet. She never liked that man, with all his talents—and that they were very great, she freely admitted—there was too much of the self righteous Pharisee about him; or no, she would not say that, for he was sincere and the Pharisee a hypocrite, a whited sepulchre, fair without and full of rottenness within; but he was of the St. Peter and not the St. John model. He might cut off the ear of the servant of

the high priest, and may be then deny the Blessed Saviour before it was over. He never had. No ; and it was the mercy of God he had not. If he like Fenelon, had fallen, he would not, like Fenelon, have risen. His very virtues, through the pride and hardness of his heart, almost degenerated into vices, whereas the mild and saintly Fenelon, by his gentleness and piety, converted his weakness into virtues, or rather raised himself above them, to a greater excellence and a more sublime holiness. And Rollin, the noble preceptor, the learned historian ; why the very sight of him—she meant of course his writings—warmed her heart. There was nothing of the harsh tutor in him ; he was a friend, a guide, a father with whom you could converse freely and without embarrassment. She never felt the least bit afraid of him, for with all his wondrous learning he had the piety and sweet simplicity of a little child. How in the midst of his instruction he keeps the mind turning to God and filling it with reverence and respect for His holy laws ! Fenelon and Rollin were of the same nature in their great talents, their urbanity, their unaffected goodness. Had Fenelon written *Ancient History*, he would have used the very words Rollin did. Had Rollin written that incomparable treatise on government, *Telemachus*, he would have used no other words than Fenelon used. They both

would have been just what they were now ; not a line, not a sentence would have been different. St. Bernard was another great favorite of hers. The clearness, depth and elegance of his writings, the zealously with which he defended the Church and swept back, like a powerful torrent, the errors of his time, won her warmest admiration ; but the gentle and merciful traits of his character were what she most dwelt upon. The holy courage he manifested in censuring Thibald, Count of Champagne, for his severity to one of his vassals and the restitution he caused him to make, the mercy he showed the poor malefactor he met being led to death, snatching him from his terrible fate, converting him and ever treating him with kindness and respect, his generous interference in behalf of the Jews, his rising from a sick bed to restore by his holy influence peace to the distracted province of Metz—these and other incidents of his life displaying the tenderness and magnanimity of his heart were referred to in a manner that showed the deep impression they made upon her. And dwelling on the mercy of St. Bernard brought her to speak of the mild and benignant St. Francis de Sales. She emphatically declared him to be her most esteemed friend, one whom she revered next to her beloved St. Liguori ; and this for her was saying a great deal.

when she constantly referred to the latter, and gave him as an authority for almost everything she said relating to one's duties. "Read the Blessed Liguori," she would enthusiastically exclaim; listen attentively to what he so clearly and patiently tells you, and you will never be at a loss what to do or what to avoid. His voice has in its tones the tender love of a mother and the gentle authority of a father. He never speaks but for good; and rarely silent, he never wearies, I turn to his words with pleasure, I leave them with reluctance." Her ardent appreciation of these, her favorites, was not without its effect on her listeners. Christine and Annie turned to them with greater reverence than ever. Jerome heard what he had lazily passed over a hundred times, and it roused in him a spirit of research, and a more lively interest in grave and thoughtful writers. Not that he became any more grave or thoughtful in his bearing; but he ceased to experience that listlessness which used to steal over him, and was not so much at a loss what to do with himself and how to dispose of his spare moments. He was not so eager for change; he quite gave up a contemplated trip to the east, and found out he need not rush to the old world to tear himself from *ennui* and find material for thought. The old world could be brought to him, and in his pleasant room, with the blessed sights and sounds

of home all around him, he could read the lessons which crumbling palaces and moss-grown greatness could teach him abroad. And when in after years he gazed upon them with a fuller and more enlightened mind he might then understand many a hint, many a suggestion that would now pass heedlessly before him. From history and biography he turned with avidity to books of travel and works of science, and gave now and then a patronizing glance into the arcana of arts. He talked of Michael Angelo and Raphael, and their wondrous creations, and pleased himself with thinking that he was an excellent judge, able to pronounce without mistake upon their respective merits. No tourist who has scampered over half the world, with guide book in one hand and note book in the other, could have done this with a greater air of authority or a more profound sense of his own wisdom. As to the blooming and beautiful Kittie, the effect on her was, we will not say magical, but very marked. She did not have the brightest and bluest of blue eyes, a perfect set of features, a complexion like the rose-petal, and golden hair, that in spite of her would get into the most lovely and distracting of curls without knowing it. Smoothing and arranging these little rings, and making them stay in their proper places, was a good excuse for her to take frequent peeps at

herself in the looking glass. Her mother used to get provoked at it. "Why, Kittie," she would exclaim, "will you ever be done fussing with that hair of yours? I declare you are as vain as a peacock that only thinks of strutting and showing off its fine feathers. I don't believe you ever think of your soul, only of the poor body, that, by-and-by, will be old and wrinkled and eat up by worms;" and Kittie, shrugging her pretty shoulders and giving her curly head a slight toss, would think what hateful, old fashioned notions her mother had; just like the Sisters. They were always so afraid the girls that were handsome would some time or other find it out and be pleased with it. She didn't know why God gave beauty if it wasn't that people might be pleased with it. And with this small sophistry she turned a deaf ear to her mother's homely words of warning, and was evidently not only pleased, but delighted, with hers. She was a good-natured, affectionate daughter, ever ready and willing to help her mother and wait on her father, was proud of her brothers, and looked upon herself as the most favored of mortals to have such a sister as Annie, so pious and thoughtful, so exceedingly like a nun herself that she would not be a bit surprised if some day she would not be one. Joyous and merry-hearted, with a pleasant word for every body, she was a

perfect sunbeam at home. Her brothers never thought of her vanity; they only knew she was the prettiest girl they ever saw, and the best hand in the world to make dumplings and give the right flavoring to pies and puddings, and what more could they want? Her father would say, "why yes, the little budget is vain; with all her beauty she'll never be the sensible girl Annie is," and then in a bantering manner generally add, "Annie is like me, looks like me and has all my traits." With a sharp reprimand for *his* vanity in appropriating Annie's good qualities, and a positive assurance that it was after him Kittie took—however little she might *look* like him, it was easy enough to see who she was like at heart—the subject was suffered to drop. But since her intercourse with Clara, a change was perceptible; just as pleasant and cheerful as before, she studied the looking-glass less and the Lives of the Saints more.

"Kittie is not now forever before the looking-glass," her mother began to say, "she thinks of something else than her looks; she's getting to be sensible." As to Clara, she was wholly unconscious of the good she was achieving. Entirely too occupied with her various duties, she had no time to indulge in self-complacency about it. She had read and pondered a great deal, and had once been as vain over her superior intellect and vast proficiency

as poor Kittie over her beauty. But the truth was beginning to dawn on her ; she did not know quite so much as she fancied ; her learned articles were not as heavily fraught with deep thought and solid information as once appeared. She was uneasy about them, and longed for the time when she could submit them to her brother's inspection.

"They are wrong somewhere," she would say to herself, after a careful reading of them, "and with all my boasted sharpness of vision I can't tell where it is," and real tears of vexation would roll over her cheeks at the thought. Her father saw the phase through which her mind was passing, and was touchingly kind and gentle to her. He easily divined that it would be to Leo she would appeal, and he wrote a warning letter to him begging him to be very considerate and careful, and not to depress her natural buoyancy of temper by too severe criticism ; to bear in mind that she was still young and had accomplished much for one of her years. In answer, Leo assured him he had nothing to fear ; that he would be candid, but at the same time like the blessed Francis de Sales, temper his candor with mildness and moderation. He well knew what a good, noble sister he had, and how bravely she had tried to do her duty and be a joy and a comfort to them all, and as God had wonderfully blessed her efforts in this respect, so he

doubted not that by-and-by her literary efforts would in like manner be blessed. But her sister's continued avoidance of the Church and its holy sacraments wore her still more than her doubt as to the general excellence of her articles. She could hardly hide her uneasiness from her father, or appear with her usual cheerfulness before him. Unlike Kittie Bryan, there was no aversion or dislike springing up in her heart against her, but a great fear and terror of the Divine judgment. She felt she could not, without the danger of detraction, keep speaking to her friends about it; so she clung to her favorite authors, and finding attentive and sympathetic listeners, talked of them instead of her stricken sister and her sorrows. Father Doyle, their kind and zealous pastor, promised to pray for her, and feeling she done right in asking his prayers, she patiently bided her brother's return.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE long sunny days of June passed, the burning days of July followed, and Leo and the boys—Mrs. Spafford's Frank and Theodore—were at home. Leo looked ten years older than when he parted with Clara and his father, the fall before. The last year had been one of hard study, and with the

title of M.D. to his name, was ready to commence life. Frank and Theodore had grown considerable, and were fine, healthy looking boys ; they had a great deal to tell of the Brothers, and their studies and premiums and school mates, always referring to the latter as if their family knew them as well as they did, and had all their preferences and aversions in the matter. Their grandfather listened with patience and kindness to their volubility, and seemed, in his grave, gentle way, to enjoy it. Clara looked wise and patronizing, and thought what a blessing it was to have the noisy, happy children at home, and how gay and lightsome it made the whole house. She had heard people complain that there was no peace or quiet from the time vacations commenced till they ended, and the children were once more back to their schools. She had no sympathy with such ; Frank and Theodore made her heart glad, and she liked exceedingly well to play the role of a wise, thoughtful and provident aunt to them. " Aunt Clara, listen ; Aunt Clara, you make the best tarts in the world ; Aunt Clara, just hear what I've got to say ; Aunt Clara here, and Aunt Clara there." Why, it was music in her ears, and threw around her a benignant authority undreamed of before. She thought never were such children ; she did not wonder their teachers spoke of them as they did to

her father and Leo; she was no ways surprised that their poor, sad mother looked upon them with such doating affection, they showed such noble traits of character. They were joyous, their poor mother dull and gloomy; yet they did not, as many thoughtless children would, shrink from her. They sought her company, and told all their wonderful adventures to her, and entertained her with a minute and very particular account of every holiday and half-holiday they had had the whole year; and when she wound her thin arms around them and drew them to her heart, weeping over them, they wept too, and assured her over and over again of their devoted attachment, and how they should always love and cherish her, and how, when they got to be men, they would labor for her and make her old age happy and delightful. And when they spoke of their father—although young as they were, they knew he had been very unkind to her and could not remember that he had ever shown any affection for them, had always been black and surly to them—they spoke of him respectfully, even pityingly. “If poor father had been brought up right, and taught to know his duty he would have been different, and things would have been pleasant for us all.” And from the lips of these children Clara recognized a holy and solemn truth. Yes, indeed, had Homer Spafford

been brought up right, had he received the blessing of a Christian education, he would have been a different man, and much unhappiness have been spared him and his family. As it was, it was painful to think of, and hastily breathing a prayer for her stricken sister, his unfortunate wife, she turned her attention to other subjects. It was eight or ten days since Leo's return, and during that time he had examined her earlier articles, and calling her to his room after dinner, in as gentle a manner as possible he informed her of their unworthiness to appear in that future book of hers that was to do so much to enlighten a darkened world. Her later ones had some merit, he admitted. Seeing how pale and grieved she looked, he went further and kindly added, considerable merit ; more, a great deal more than he expected. They were not so positive in tone, so overwrought in style, so far above the comprehension of ordinary mortals. In fact he thought the generality of mankind might be able to understand and be benefitted by them. He pointed out the mistakes, and, what was infinitely more, showed how they might be corrected. Her joy at being set right counterbalanced her chagrin at the failure of her earlier efforts. She looked up, bright and happy, in his face.

"I have not pained you," he quietly remarked

"No," she replied, with animation, "what is there to be pained about it?"

"They are all worthless," she continued, pointing to the rejected manuscripts; "but these," glancing lovingly at the others, "have merit in them; and going over them again, I will be able to bring the merit out. Oh, if you had not told me where they were wrong, I might have puzzled my brain for months over them without finding out where it was."

"Would you have done it?" he wonderingly asked.

"To be sure, I would. May be you feel it would not be worth the labor, but to me it would. I cannot bear to leave anything imperfect. Whatever I do, I want it done well; then if I don't accomplish so much, the little I do will have more value and do more good."

"You still hug to your heart the hope," he would not say delusion, "that your writing is to do good?"

"Certainly. Why not? You hope, by practising your profession, to do good?"

"Yes," he smilingly returned.

"Then why should I not, by practising mine, hope to do the same. What is there absurd about it?"

"But do you candidly believe the labor of yours is as useful as the labor of the other professions?"

"For shame, Leo, for shame. What is a people, a nation without literature? How soon, if writing were to cease, the pen be laid aside, would the arts and sciences be forgotten, and man return to the savage state. No, writing is good, is absolutely, necessary to us."

"To our fallen nature," Leo, with grave humor added.

"You don't mean that for a sneer?" she tartly asked.

"No, Clara, no; but you are so in earnest."

"Am I one given to be any other than earnest about any thing I take in hand?"

"I know it. And you are apt to attach a literal meaning to every thing said to you."

"I see no harm in that."

"Certainly not, my dear sister, no harm. Only by it you may lose now and then the point of a pleasant remark."

"If that is all I lose, I do not see much cause for regret. There is too much levity and frivolity in the world."

"Do you suppose a rigid gravity any more pleasing to God, or more conducive to a strict performance of one's duties than a light, gladsome turn?"

"I cannot say that I do. But you are confounding two different things."

"What?"

"Why, gravity and morbidness. Gravity may be very earnest, and in its earnestness strong and hopeful. Morbidness is never strong or hopeful; it is dull and gloomy, and so miserably weak that everything frightens and discourages it. Of course I do not admire it either in writing or real life. Empty, giddy frivolity, and weak, sickly morbidness are twin sisters, and go hand-in-hand together. Where the one is, the other is sure not to be far off; it is only a slight transition from a senseless laugh to a causeless sigh. But to go back to writers, and the good a conscientious one may effect. I said writing is necessary to us, and, you added, to our fallen nature, and whether necessary to us as belonging to our fallen nature, matters little in the fact that it really seems a necessity to us. If good writing is not provided to satisfy this want, look at the vile, poisonous stuff that is greedily swallowed. Now if one honestly and conscientiously labor to furnish healthful reading, is not his labor useful? does it not do good?"

"Certainly, most certainly it does."

"Then never, Leo, speak in that thoughtless manner again. It may be fashionable, but it is not truthful; neither is it sensible." Leo smiled.

"I have played the wise Fadlaben to you," he good naturedly said, "and you have admirably borne with me in the same praiseworthy spirit. I

will bear your restrictions. For the future, I promise I will be very careful and circumspect in my remarks about writers and their labors."

Clara's sharp eyes rested inquiringly upon him to see if he were in earnest ; no mock, gallant expression was in his face, but a gentle, respectful gravity. She was satisfied.

"When," he asked, "do you think you will have enough to form a book?"

"Oh, I can't tell. With all that pile of rubbish," she glanced at the rejected manuscripts, "to replace with sensible stuff, and a great deal more besides, it is impossible to say when."

"Maybe, Clara, not till your dark hair is white ; white as father's."

"No, no," she impatiently exclaimed, "I will not put it off so long as that. I will say a year, perhaps a couple."

"And do you," he asked, in astonishment, "propose to spend every leisure moment from your other duties, for the next two years, in the laboriously toiling over and preparing for the press those heavy, exhaustive subjects?"

A shadow rested on her broad, open brow, and it was several moments before she answered. Her lips trembled, and tears appeared in the depths of her earnest eyes. Her former failures rose up discouragingly before her. And she had thought

them so good, so perfect, so calculated to dispel doubts and darkness, and make one strong, intelligent and worthy. Maybe the same fate awaited those she was going at, and they never would appear, and would only be another proof against her, of her miserable inability. But no, no, she would not think of that. The battle was not to the strong, neither was the race to the swift, but to whom God willeth. She would bravely go to work, and the good God would carry her through it. Her former want of success was only intended to teach her not to place too much confidence in her own powers; and not to be so puffed up about her superior intellect. With deep contrition she remembered what complacency it had once filled her with; and how little charity or patience she had for others, less quick than she fancied herself to be. She would, God helping her, try to get over that; and as Leo had promised for the future to speak more respectfully of writers and their labors, so she, for the future, would be more kind and forbearing to those that appeared dull and stupid. And she would go to work, and not fear the weariness it involved. The old bright look was in her face as she answered:

“Why not, Leo. Our life was not given us for a holiday.”

"I know it; but at the same time we are not to work ourselves to death. And it strikes me that filling a good thick octavo in two years, with the heavy matter you propose, would be enough to kill any man or woman in christendom."

A faint flush mantled Clara's cheek. "I have given up the thought of an octavo," she said, "a 12mo. I think will be large enough."

Leo passed his hand over his face and bent his eyes in a thoughtful manner on the carpet. He knew his sister's gaze was rivetted on him, and not for the world would he wound her feelings by a smile.

After a slight pause he gravely remarked: "But even a 12mo. of several hundred pages—for I know you would not want less than several hundred—would be a Herculean task; considering what the pages would be filled with. And maybe," he added, as if it was an after thought of no very great importance, "they would also be somewhat wearying to the reader. Strong doses, as a general thing, are not relished, that is, if there are too many of them. If your articles were to appear in some of the periodicals, they might serve to give weight to it, and with the lighter ones around them, be more generally read, and as a consequence better liked."

Clara was delighted with the idea. "Oh, that

would be an excellent way to introduce them to the public," she exclaimed, " afterwards they could be collected into a volume as was Doctor Johnson's 'Idler?' You recollect the essays forming that admirable work first appeared in the columns of the 'Universal Chronicle?' "

" Yes, I believe I have read something of it. If I mistake not they were put in, not for ballast, but to take the place of news, the printer gravely stating 'the occurrences of the week were not sufficient to fill its columns;' rather a strange fact in the history of newspapers, I should say."

" It certainly would be for these days. But have you any periodical in your mind?"

" No. I am now going west; for a while I shall have enough to attend to in getting settled and establishing a practice; but when I am fairly going, I will see about them. In the meantime you can be reviewing the old and preparing for the new ones. You will not forget the authors I have referred you to?"

" I think not; but for fear I should, here are pencil and paper. I will just note them down; then there will be no danger of my forgetting them."

She hastily scribbled them off, and then sat, looking so happy and eager. The momentary doubt had vanished from her heart, and now, buoy-

ant and hopeful, she was anxious to be at her task. Her restless fingers twirled the pencil, and made little crosses and dots and circles, and without glancing at the paper scratched off *Glorias* and *Deo gratias* all over it, except where the great names looked up smilingly at her. All the time her tongue ran on nimbly about how she should manage so as to have more time for her favorite labors, how she must not, in her eagerness, neglect her dear father and poor Florence, how necessary her care over them was, how happy she should be if Florence was herself again, and then back to her articles. The old ones attended to, she would go right to the new ones ; she hardly knew what subject she should select for her first ; she wanted it something sensible and practical. "The advantages of Adversity, and the Christian Manner of bearing it," came up before her, and immediately maxim upon maxim from the incomparable Liguori, Thomas a-Kempis and Francis de Sales came with it. She shook her head ; it would not do ; there was too much the tone of a sermon in the title ; and she knew a great many cared precious little to hear, let alone read them. If she could only give a distinguished, if unintelligible appellation to it, "Out of the Dark into the light," "The Labyrinth threaded," "Acherontian vapors passed and Olympian Heights gained," or some such, she might put

the same lessons, the same ideas in it, and gain readers; but without the prestige of a high-sounding title she was afraid her articles would be passed over, and suffered to sink into unobserved oblivion. Leo laughingly asked her where she got her knowledge of the literary taste of the day.

"From reading and observation," she gravely answered.

"Ah," was his significant reply.

When Clara got started she was sure to go to the end of her subject, and now she gave at length her opinion on essay writing, its duties, obligations and exactions, and considering the necessity of a grand, imposing title, her theme might with propriety have been termed "Scaling the Heights and Exploring the Depths." Leo listened patiently, and when she paused, he remarked she liked the Bryans. It seemed he was tired of the subject and wanted to draw the conversation into other channels. Yes, she liked them. Their ways did not clash on those she had been accustomed to. Ways! what did he mean. Why, their plain, simple bearing, their farmer manners, if he must come right out with it. Farmer manners, indeed! who but a fool would expect to find with the rough, hard work and heavy cares of a farm, the courtly polish and white-handed grace of an easier life. She did not suppose Mr. Bryan was one whit more awk-

ward or clownish than Virgil himself. She knew he was a kind-hearted, sensible man, a little stiff and blunt may be, but making up for it in his candor and honesty. Mrs. Bryan always looked neat and tasty; if her clothes were not exactly of the latest style, they had the advantage of being becoming; which could not always be said of the fashions. She should never forget how good and motherly she was when her father and Florence were gone, and how she let the girls stay with her till they got back, and what a care the whole family had for her, and how they strove to comfort and cheer her in her loneliness. If Leo only knew them as she did, he would feel that never in no station, high or low, were truer, better, warmer-hearted people. Leo was delighted to hear it. He was glad his sister was sensible enough to recognize worth under simple manners. He had himself been very favorably impressed with them. He thought, for one of his advantages, he never saw a more intelligent and promising young man than Bryan's nephew, Peter Cleary. He was one of the kind that would make his mark in the world. Yes, Clara agreed, but for all that she liked him the least of the family. The girls were proud of him, and sung his praises in her ears till she was tired of it; but although she had to acknowledge his merit, there was something

about him she did not exactly like. He was distant, and afraid, it seemed, his dignity would be hurt if he did not keep a sharp look-out, and repel anything like friendly advances. At first she had treated him as she did the other members of the family, that is, friendly and cordially, but of late she had been somewhat colder to him. She did not know that one of her rather blunt remarks had sunk in his heart and left a sore spot there. It was about his being at his uncle's during the winter, or when out of place. "It's well you have a home you can turn to," she had said to him, one evening that he came over with Mrs. Bryan while her father and Florence were gone, "whether you do enough to pay for your board or not, you are boarded, and do not have to spend what you have laid up." She meant no harm in the world, but his face reddened, and the next week he astonished his uncle and aunt by taking out his pocket-book, and asking, nay insisting, on paying them what he owed them. Owed? why what did he owe them? Why, for his board. He did not want to live on them or any one else; he was willing to pay his way along, and did not want to sponge on them because he happened to be a relative of theirs. Mr. Bryan hut-tutted at him, and bade him put up his pocket-book, wondered what put that nonsense in his head, and Mrs. Bryan cried, asked him if he

thought they grudged him the morsel he ate, and suddenly starting up, as the idea presented itself to her sharp mind, begged him to tell them if this was the way he took to make Michael pay him ; that he did more than he ought to, and Michael was so stupid as not to know it, but now she hoped his eyes would be opened, and he'd show he had some regard for honesty, and not go cheating his dead sister's child. This settled the question, and no more was heard about board bill, but Peter shunned Mr. Kent's, and when business called him there, appeared stiff and constrained. It was very foolish in him to take offence at so small a thing, but fighting his own way through life ever since he was a little boy he had one time and another such cruel rebuffs, sneers and taunts, and they had made him over-sensitive on the subject of his rights, or his crowding on others, or his inability to do for himself. Under happier auspices, with his naturally sunny temperament, this trait in his character would never have been dreamed of ; but now those well acquainted with him knew, although he was the best soul alive, as they expressed it, that he was very independent, did not care to accept favors, and was apt to take umbrage at every little thing trenching on his dignity or self respect. And not paying his own way at his uncle's was a mortal blow to both.

Although very silent in his resentment, saying nothing at all derogatory of Clara, his cousins could see he had a prejudice against her, and wondered what it was for, and concluded it was because he could not help seeing the vast height she was above him, and what they considered prejudice was no prejudice at all, only a sort of a hushed, awe stricken admiration. It was Kittie that, after puzzling her brain for some time, put this happy construction on the matter. But Clara did not like him, and told her brother she thought the only danger to his success in life was his uncompromising pride. As to the Maxwells, they were a pleasant family ; rather peculiar, the mother and daughter's silent, timid little bodies, neat as snow-drops in their appearance, and quite formal and precise in their manners. But Annie and Kittie Bryan told her their formality and stiffness all came from the great respect and awe they had for her. If she were as well acquainted with them as they were, she would find them warm hearted and affectionate, and possessed of as limber tongues as one could wish. Mr. Maxwell she did not know only by reputation. He was a careful manager, very close and strictly honest. Seth had called several times while Kittie was with her. He was a gay, sprightly young man, and Leo ventured to add, one that appeared to have an excel-

lent opinion of himself. He heard the father was going to take him in partnership another year; he did not know how the new firm would be, whether it would be "Joel Maxwell and Son," or "Seth Maxwell and Father;" he thought probably the latter. He and Kittie were to be a match. Yes, he knew it; and a very good one it would be. Kittie considered him the *ne plus ultra* of all masculine excellence, and he perfectly agreed with her in her opinion. Such a happy congeniality of feeling was seldom to be met with. But the Hascalls, did they improve on their farther acquaintance? Yes, indeed. She seldom found people so different from what their appearance indicated, that is, the father and son; as to Christine and her mother, she liked them from the first; but Mr. Hascall and Jerome had disagreeably impressed her. The one seemed dull, precise and stupid, the other vain and empty-headed, with no intelligence whatever. On longer acquaintance she found the first a kind, thoughtful and very excellent sort of a person; Jerome—she hardly knew how to express herself, but certainly he was either very much changed, and changed for the better, or her former judgment of him was entirely wrong. So far from not caring for intellectual pursuits, his whole mind was given to them. He brought her books from their library, pointed out their merits, and dwelt on their beau-

ties with an enthusiasm delightful to see. His taste was so pure, his judgment so correct, that she had been tempted to submit her articles to him, but on second thought, concluded to wait for her brother. Leo highly approved of her decision, but at the same time expressed his opinion that young Hascall would have taken no mean advantage of her if she had done so. He was the soul of honor, and full of humor, and, keenly enjoying a good thing, would not for his life expose the failures and disappointments of a friend, or turn them into ridicule. But still she did better, a great deal better, not to go to him; it was more becoming to consult a member of her own family; and their not being exactly up to the mark would be less humiliating to her. He did not know she was writing. No, she had never breathed it to one of the Hascalls, but Father Doyle knew it. He did not discountenance the idea of her writing; so far from that, had given her most excellent advice on the subject, and promised to pray for her, that her writings might do good. And he had promised to pray for poor Florence, too, and she had great confidence that his prayers would be heard, for he was truly a holy man. She never saw his venerable form robed to offer up the Holy Sacrifice that she did not say to herself, 'there is one grown grey in the service of the altar;' and as the long years of

his ministrations rose up before her, think what a multitude of souls he had, under God, been the means of saving, and what a faithful labourer he had been in the vineyard of the Lord. He was a little quick and hasty, and would now and then give a sharp reproof ; but he possessed a most feeling heart, was kind and generous, and a true friend where his friendship was needed. Leo listened respectfully while his sister referred to the merits of their worthy pastor. Like her, he entertained for him a profound veneration ; but the mention of his promise to pray for poor Florence brought up painful memories, and a great gravity rested on his face ; the gravity deepened, he rose and slowly walked up and down the room. His thoughts had wandered far from the harmless topics they had been discussing ; the curtain of the past was swept back, and sombre visions of the dead and gone years floated before him. That poverty, struggles, and may be, after all, failure, were his portion ; that the airy castles he had built in his boyhood lay in shapeless ruins around him, he did not think of ; but the blighted life of his eldest sister and the miserable cause of it filled his heart with bitterness, and gave a stony intensity of gaze to his naturally mild eyes. Clara, seeing the change that had come over him, ceased her remarks, and sat silently watching him, wondering what it meant.

"And Father Doyle promised to pray for her," he abruptly said, pausing in his walk.

"Yes," she answered, "and he will, Leo; don't let your heart down."

His back was turned to her, for the question put, without waiting a reply, he had resumed his walk, and she did not see the drawn lip, and the look of agony that spread over his face. He trembled at the fate of the wretched wife left, and his soul sickened as he thought of the still more wretched husband gone. With an almost audible groan he sank into his chair, and leaning his elbow on the desk, rested his cold, damp forehead on his hand, and closed his eyes. It was not to crowd back the rushing tears, for his eyeballs were dry and burning.

"Clara," he at length asked, "can you bear a blow, a great blow?"

In a frightened whisper she said, "I will try to, Leo; what is it? Tell me? Is it about Florence?"

"It is." Just then there was a loud rap at the door, and one of the children's voices exclaiming, "Aunt Clara, Aunt Clara, grandfather has come, and has sent for you. He is in the study." She hastily rose.

"Tell me quick, Leo, quick," came from her white lips.

"No, no, not now. Go to father, he wants you. Another time."

With trembling steps and a vague numbing fear chilling her heart, she descended to the study.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CLARA, with the eagerness of youth, had expected a direct answer to her prayer, and when no direct answer came she was at first astonished, then frightened, and at last more reverent and devout than ever. Not once did her heart turn rebellious or a murmuring thought fill it. "Ask and you shall receive;" yes, receive in God's good time, and His time is always best, whether it seems so or not to the weary pleader. And she prayed on, and enlisted the prayers of others in her sister's behalf. But while I speak thus of her courage, I hope it must not be understood that her heart was all the time as light as her faith was unfaltering. No, it was not so. Heaviness often came upon her and sadness weighed her down; she struggled, tried to keep her memory fixed on strengthening passages from her favorite authors, turned to works of devotion with greater warmth, and succeeded in keeping up a cheerful semblance before her father, and in regaining part of the time a portion of her old serenity. Her learned articles would again

hold their charm over her, and the duties of the house, and taking care of her father and seeing to his comfort, again lift her up to life and keen interest in everything about her. Thus, notwithstanding her occasional gloom, a gloom hidden and known only to God, she still continued the light and sunshine of home. Her father blessed heaven for this stay and comfort in his old age, her brother thought, with all her eccentricity—he no longer termed it pedantry—never was a better or more devoted sister; her nephews, next to their mother and grandfather, loved her the best of any one on earth. Clara felt her heart warmed in this holy home attachment; and although as yet her prayers were not seemingly heard, her soul was lifted in love and gratitude to God.

A week passed, and Clara with a hushed, serious air went through the house. She had had another interview with her brother; the “other time” he alluded to had come, and the blow must have been heavy, for it bowed her to the earth. Her little prayer-book was frequently wet with her tears. She watched Mrs. Spafford with a troubled look, and could not bear to be away from her. She haunted her room continually, and when Mrs. Spafford showed signs of annoyance at her presence, would with childish earnestness beg her to bear with her, not to send her from her.

"There are only two sisters of us, Florence; my mother is gone, your mother is gone; let us be all in all to each other. Loneliness and heaviness are upon me, and your presence comforts me."

"My presence!" the poor stricken one incredulously repeated.

"Yes, Florence, at least I feel better near you, away from you I am wretched. Oh, let me stay with you." And with quivering lips and strangely pallid cheek, permission was granted her to stay. The boys frequently stole in, and chatting in their gay, happy manner, about the wonderful sights and sounds in the woods and fields they had been scouring, would lie away again to them, leaving their mother cold and statue-like in her sadness, and their aunt nervous and restless in hers. It was drawing near to the anniversary of Mrs. Spafford's widowhood, and, although she did not mention it, it was plain she knew it. Her eye had a more set expression and her countenance a harder, sterner look. She gave up her daily rides in Mr. Hascall's carriage, and no longer walked out in the garden or under the trees in the orchard. Even to her children she grew more silent, and the spasmodic caresses she occasionally bestowed upon them had in them something painful; there was so much more of defiance than of love in her whole bearing. "She shows her sorrow in such a strange

way," Clara thought, but she did not mention it even to her father or Leo. She wished the time was passed; she dreaded the effects of the poignant memories it was calling up. Frank and Theodore spoke "of this time last year when mother went to see their father, and would not take them with her; but left them at that strange hotel; and how lone and forsaken they felt. But she was coming back and their father with her; they waited and waited, and tried to be patient and not worry, but couldn't help it; and by-and-by she came, came alone and all in black, and wept over them and told them their father was dead. And how wild and strange she seemed, and how almost afraid of her they were, for sometimes she would press them to her heart and cover their faces with kisses, and then, when they asked her to tell them all about their father's sickness and death, push them from her and turn so hard and stern. They thought they were always to stay at that strange place and never see any one they knew before, and how glad they were when their dear, dear grandfather came and took them and their mother home. Every day there, seemed an eternity, and every night, as if morning and sunshine and the bright day would never again come. They could never forget that dreary, dreary time." Clara listened to them, and begged them to come to her when memory over-

burdened them ; she would always be ready to hear all they had to say, but by no means to breathe a word of that dismal time to their poor mother. They promised her they would not, and faithfully kept their promise.

It was at the close of a warm sultry day, the day but one that Clara dreaded so much, and wished so much passed, the tea over, she was in Mrs. Spafford's room reading to her from her beloved St. Liguori. The volume was "Preparation for Death." She had carefully read the chapter on the "Vanity of the World," and the one following, "The Present Life is a Journey to Eternity," and then turned a number of pages to the one on "Heaven," hoping the soothing, strengthening words would lift her poor sister from the sombre depths of her woe, when the door opened, and Theodore informed her Jerome and Christine Hascall, the young Bryans and Seth Maxwell were in the parlor. She rose, laid down the volume and went into her room to smooth her hair and change her collar and cuffs. Coming back she glanced uneasily at her sister.

"Oh, Florence," she exclaimed, "I can't bear to leave you, if you would only go too."

Mrs. Spafford silently shook her head. Theodore caught her hand, and in his loving, winning way, pressed it against his soft cheek. "Oh mother,"

he entreated, "do go with Aunt Clara. You don't know how happy it would make me."

He was the youngest, and the one that she seemed to love if possible the best.

"It takes but little then," she sadly replied, "to make my poor child happy."

"And if it takes but little," Clara rejoined, "to make him happy, can you refuse him that little?"

"No, she won't," he stoutly answered; "mother loves our happiness as she loves her life."

"Better, too, my darling, better," she responded, slowly rising. "I will go down with you, Clara," she added.

Clara was utterly surprised. When she asked her to go, she did not harbor a thought that she would. Now, while a bright smile lightened up her face, she arranged the mourning collar round her neck, took off the large heavy apron she wore, and put on her a neat little silk one with crape bands.

"Now, Florence," she cheerfully said, "you are more presentable."

"But yourself, Aunt Clara, are you presentable?" the child asked, feeling it quite important that she should make a respectable appearance.

"Yes, Theodore, yes. This blue muslin," glancing down carelessly at it, "is well enough."

"But stick this flower somewhere in your hair,"

he said, unceremoniously plucking a scarlet chanthus from the vase standing on the mantel-piece, and handing it to her, "and here put this other red one, fuchsia, I believe you call it, on your collar." Smiling good naturedly at his taste, she accepted the flowers, and placed them as directed.

"Come, Florence," she said, taking her hand and leading the way. The child followed, the parlor he knew was not forbidden ground to him or Frank.

Mr. Kent was standing near the door talking to Jerome Hascall; Leo was conversing with the young Bryans and Seth Maxwell; Kittie, Annie and Christine were seated on the sofa by the open window. Mrs. Spafford retreated to a corner where the back of an arm-chair partially hid her from view; Clara came forward and cordially welcomed her friends. The young ladies before her entrance had laid aside their hats and scarfs.

"It was so warm," they said in explanation.

"That was right, and I will just step up stairs with them," Clara returned.

"Not at all," Christine exclaimed; "leave them where they are. They are well enough on that stand and in no one's way. We are not going to stay a great while. It was so pleasant, Jerome and I thought we would take a walk. We went past your place and met Annie and Kittie. and

their brothers and Mr. Maxwell, coming here, so we concluded to turn back with them and call too. We do not intrude, I hope."

"Certainly not. How can you think it?"

"But we know, Clara, this is a peculiarly trying time for you all. Poor Mrs. Spafford, how lone she looks in her far corner. I must go over and speak to her."

She rose, and stepping to the window drew up a chair and seated herself beside her. Clara watched her and knew how hard it would be to engage her in conversation. From her sister her eye wandered to the group around her brother. The young Bryans were tall, slender and dark, like their father, but had some of the keenness and sharpness of their mother in their clear cut features and bright blue eyes. Seth Maxwell was hardly the medium height, slight and graceful in form, with a shrewd, intelligent face, and a happy, condescending manner. He understood his position well, and evidently had for that position a profound and lasting respect. He was a successful young village merchant, the heir to a handsome fortune, the affianced of decidedly the best and most beautiful girl in the whole place. He bore his honors with conscious dignity, blended with a certain humility that gave him that gracious air of patronage so pleasing to the many, so displeasing to the few.

Clara smiled while looking at him, and could not help thinking of Leo's remarks about the name of the new firm. Jerome Hascall joined the group, and Henry Bryan, the elder brother, stepped over to her father. Presently they moved to where she and Annie and Kittie were sitting. Jerome asked her opinion of an editorial appearing in the last paper, and spoke of a spirited article headed "Whither are we drifting." The style of it was grave and thoughtful, for the writer seemed to think the drifting was not to broad open seas, with the prospect of a happy voyage, but to seething maelstroms and certain destruction, where only a spar, a shred of sail or bit of a splinter, coming up with the whirling eddies, would be all that would be left of the full-rigged handsome vessel that left port so full of promise ; but Jerome looked any thing but lugubrious while referring to the article. He rubbed his hands gleefully, and spoke in his cheeriest tones. There was something in his last Quarterly he thought Miss Kent would like to see. What was it? "Ancient and Modern Belief in a Future Life." It was a splendid article ranging over all the beliefs from the earliest times, and showing, under every age and clime and every form of worship, how the soul in its cravings has reached forth to a great Hereafter. Clara would like it? Certainly. Then he would with pleasure bring it

over in the morning. He would have brought it that evening, but he did not think of calling when he left home. *His* drifting at all events, was all right, so George Bryan thought, as a smile lit up his sharp eye. But while Clara performed her duty as hostess, and wore a smiling face, her heart was heavy and sad, and an unvoiced prayer continually went up for her sorrowing sister. There were laughter and talk going on in that parlor, and underneath the smooth surface was dread and fear. The room darkened and the lamp on the table was lighted. There was a call for music, and Maxwell persuaded Kittie to allow him to lead her to the piano. They were a sensible set, he averred, and wanted none of the crashing, breath-choking confusions, called operatic airs. They wanted something they could understand and enjoy; some home melody that would strike a responsive chord in the heart of every one present. Kittie asked him to select one for her, but in the blandest manner possible he informed her they had no choice as to which of her delightful songs they listened to, just to take the one she thought best to favor them with, and they would be satisfied. She paused a moment perplexed, glanced pityingly at Mrs. Spafford in her far corner, ran her dimpled fingers over the keys, and in a sweet warbling voice sang :

"The light of other days is faded,
And all their glories past,
For grief with heavy wing hath shaded,
The hopes too bright to last.

The world, which morning's mantle clouded,
Shines forth with purer rays ;
But the heart ne'er feels in sorrow shrouded,
The light of other days.

The leaf which autumn tempests wither,
The birds which then take wing,
When winter's winds are past, come hither
To welcome back the spring.

The very ivy on the ruin,
In gloomful life displays ;
But the heart alone sees no renewing,
The light of other days."

Maxwell was not a true prophet. All were not satisfied. Clara bit her lips with vexation, and wondered what perverse spirit prompted Kittie above all others to sing that particular one. Would no one stop her? Must they have the whole of it down to the last doleful line? She walked to her sister, and tried to divert her attention by some cheerful remarks. She smiled and said :

"Don't mind the poor child's song. She feels for me, and that is the way she has taken to show it."

"Yes, and a foolish way it is too," Clara impatiently replied. Yet in her heart she thanked God that Florence realized the kind motive prompting it. She had seemed so abstracted to everything around her that she had hardly expected it

Scarcely had Kittie risen from the instrument when Christine seated herself before it, and after a short prelude, sang those beautiful lines of Tamer Anne Kermode :

“ Why art thou so weak and weary ?
 Why so troubled is thy heart ?
 Let the clouds of doubt and sadness,
 Which hangs o'er thy path, depart.
 Hoping, loving, and believing ;
 Still let Faith thy watchword be ;
 Ah ! remember, wayworn pilgrim,
 As thy day, thy strength shall be !

God—thy God will not forget thee—
 Trembling heart, why dost thou fear ?
 What though earthly friends forsake thee,
 Wanderer, faint not—He is near.
 List not to the angry waters,
 Of Life's ever restless sea ;
 Follower of the Cross, remember,
 As thy day, thy strength shall be !

Let the past, with all its sorrows,
 All its memories of pain ;
 Let it hide itself in shadows,
 Woo it not to the again.
 Trust in God, ne'er fear the future,
 Peace and joy shall come to thee ;
 Christian—shrink not from thy burden,
 As thy day, thy strength shall be !”

Her voice swelled clearer and richer till in its power and sweetness it made one think of the angel band, singing round the Great White Throne ; there was so much of heaven, so little of earth the purity and holiness of its tones. Like she felt Kittie's song was not appropriate,

her great desire to soothe and comfort she forgot her usual timidity, and almost unasked had seated herself before the instrument. Rising from it she let her eyes, for the first time since Kittie sang, rest on the widow.

"She too feels for me," she whispered to Clara.

"Yes, Florence," Clara returned, "and there is not one in the room that does not sympathize with you."

"They know the time?"

It was the first reference she had made to it, and a strange feeling thrilled Clara to hear her so calmly speak of it. "Yes," she said, "they know it, and know too that God will carry you through it, that as your day, your strength shall be."

"Yes, yes," was drearily answered; and the firmly pressed lips and the cold eye again struck Clara with the painful thought of how strangely her bereavement affected her. No softening glance, no yearning tenderness; white, tearless and desolate; a strong hardness on each feature, a something in her whole bearing that spoke more of unforgiving hate than of stricken love. She never mentioned the dead one's name, she winced if others mentioned it in her presence, and then stood or sat as if suddenly frozen, unable to move or stir a hand. Clara wondered at it, and could not make out what it meant. She knew she had not been happy in her

married life, but like a second St. Monica, she had patiently borne her trials. That under her christian forbearance and unfailing gentleness, she did not, could not, like her husband, with his thankless unbelief and cruel sneers at every thing relating to her religion, and its obligations and soul uplifting ceremonies, did not surprise or startle her. She could not help it, no one could ; it was impossible for her to feel any thing but a chastened aversion for him—chastened, because it was kept down, subdued, and never allowed to blaze up into a burning and consuming hate. But when Death stepped between them, and his dark plumes shaded him from sight, how was it that then her piety failed her, and keeping through life her hate in subjection, it now burst all restraint and lit up her soul with such a ghastly flame? For, monstrous as it seemed, she could not be mistaken ; it was not bruised and bleeding affection that had wrought the fearful change in her ; with shuddering awe and appalled vision she saw it was Hate, unhallowed Hate. It was sickening to think of, and if she could she would have shut it out from her sight, but it was too plain before her. Long after her friends had left, and the chapter from Thomas à Kempis had been read, and night prayers said, and the house closed and silent, she mused on the strangeness of her sister's grief, and asked herself over and

over again what it meant ; was it to last forever ? would she never again be her patient, loving and christian self ? The poignancy of these questions, the deep and lasting consequences they involved drew at last a cry of agony from her lips. Eternity, dark and threatening, rose up before her. She saw her poor sister, once so good, so holy, borne down its turbid stream ; gloom was upon her and desolation of desolations wrapped her around ; no Father's home awaited her ; no peace, no comfort was in store for her ; only weeping, and wailing, and misery, and anguishing despair were her everlasting portion. Shuddering, she fell upon her knees in wild and supplicating prayer. " Oh, blessed, blessed Saviour," she cried, " remember all thou hast suffered for her, and let her not fall a prey to the enemy. She is dead in her sorrow, in her strange, remorseless hate, but roll the stone from the sepulchre of her heart, call her back to life, command the bonds that hold her to be loosened, and let the sun of Thy love once more shine upon her." Her sobbing became so convulsive that the words no longer found utterance ; her form swayed to and fro like a reed shaken in the tempest ; then there was a lull ; crossing her arms on the stand where stood the statue of the Madonna, she bowed her head with its heavy falling tresses upon them. " The moonbeams coming in through the window

and a pale light through the room ; gradually the sobbing died away, not a sound broke the solemn hush. Again the bowed head was raised, the hands clasped, the lips moved, and, calm and tranquil, the beautiful prayer of St. Bernard to the Blessed Virgin rose on the night air. As it was finished, and a low "Amen" fervently breathed, a white-robed form glided into the room, sank down by her side, and wound an arm around her.

"Clara, Clara, your prayers have been heard. The stone is rolled from my heart, and I feel as I have not felt since that terrible time."

Clara started and joyfully exclaimed, "Thank God for it. Oh, Florence, thank God. In His great mercy, He hath given his angels, yea, the Queen of His angels, charge over us, and through her His blessing hath descended upon you." Then raising her eyes in an impassioned voice, she repeated the words of the Psalmist : "'The Lord hath looked forth from his sanctuary. From heaven the Lord hath looked upon the earth, that he might hear the groans of them that are in fetters, that he might release the children of the slain, that they may declare the name of the Lord in Zion and His praise in Jerusalem.' Oh, Florence, Florence, my soul sickened when I thought what your eternity would be ; but now, oh now---" she did not finish the sentence, but clasped her in her arms ; tears rolled

swiftly over their cheeks, not bitter, scalding tears, but tears soothing, comforting, strengthening. They seemed to moisten the stricken one's parched and shriveled soul; the Prayer of the Garden voiced the immensity of her grief, her sorrow, her desolation. "Father, not my will but thine be done." Golgotha, that had been forgotten, was again remembered; the buffets, the stripes, the thorns, the nails, the bitter draught, and over the agony of them all, that cry so full of divine love and tenderness, so full of reproach to proud, vindictive man, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Through all the centuries that cry hath resounded, lifting the heart from its earth-born passions, and infusing into it a heavenly strength. The wrongs and indignities that had been heaped upon her, that had shut out her light, and crushed the peace and happiness of her life, lost their powerful hold on her memory, and dropped down into the dust-covered depths of the past. She felt the heavy, heavy load removed, and raised her head with a sensation of relief and coming rest. There was a long silence. The clock below in the study struck two.

"Florence," Clara softly said, "can't you sit up now? Are you not tired kneeling?"

"It seems," she answered, in a voice still tremulous, "that I ought never to leave this supplicating

posture. To think how long I hardened my heart and shut out the sunshine from you all, by stubborn gloom."

"But we don't mind that. In the joy of having you yourself again, that will easily be forgotten. As to the hardening of your heart, don't now be too cast down about it. Make a sincere act of contrition for it, and then leave it in the hands of God, without fear. Remember what the blessed Liguori says: 'The very instant you repent and ask forgiveness, God answers and grants you your pardon.* You are sorry, truly sorry are you not?' There was the pathos of artless innocence in her voice, the earnestness and trembling joyous gratitude of one who sees a soul rescued from the abyss. Sorry! That was a faint word to express her grief and contrition. Her whole being was, so to speak, permeated with a profound remorse, a shuddering horror, a horror that shut not out heaven, but made the sky look dark, only where the Cross stretched out its saving arms. There, there was light, and in this light she drew in life and strength, and her horror reached not the stage of despair. Black as the rushing wings of night came up that hour so fraught with mortal pain to her; she looked at it as one for the last time lets his eyes rest on the face of the dead. Shudderingly she clasped her

* Preparation for Death, page 155.

hands. "Oh, my Father, I have suffered, suffered," she cried. On one side was this shrouded past that made her even now recoil and tremble, on the other a merciful God waiting to receive, to pardon to bless ; "and I have sinned," she added, in the low, smothered voice of agony, "forgive ! forgive !" She threw herself prostrate on the floor ; Clara's presence was forgotten ; she was alone in her fearful struggle. How long a time passed she knew not ; the moon sunk behind the western hills ; they were in darkness. Softly Clara bowed down and listened to her breathing, then she placed her hand upon her face, warm tears were coursing down the thin cheeks. With her handkerchief she gently wiped them off.

"Florence," she whispered. "can't you rise now. The good God sees and knows all, and you need not fear." Mrs. Spafford at once arose. "And now," continued Clara, "you must go back to bed. The morning breeze is coming up, and you will get chilled." Groping her way, she led her to the door, into her own room, and to her bed. Once in bed, she wrapped the light spread over her, and was turning away when the thin skeleton-like arms were thrown up around her, and she found herself pressed to her heart.

"May God's blessing rest on you, my darling, in

nocent child," she sobbed; "may you be saved from sorrow like mine."

With tears dimming her eyes, Clara turned silently away. She again experienced an intense desire to lift the veil and know what those sorrows were. That they were not what the world generally took them to be, she felt certain. There was a mystery over them, and that it was of a poignant nature she did not doubt. "To change her as it has, and make her so hard and unrelenting! Oh, it must be stinging and maddening," she said to herself, after she had lain her head on the pillow. "But great is the mercy of God; the sting is now removed; an antidote has been administered, and Florence will revive and live. Oh, poor, dear father, how his heart will throb with gratitude when I tell him; and Leo, too. I can hardly wait." She pressed the crucifix to her lips, and closed her eyes; but it was not to sleep.

CHAPTER XIX.

MR. BRYAN had another start. It was Saturday afternoon. He, Mrs. Bryan, Annie and Kittie were in the church preparing for confession; his open prayer-book was in his hand, his eyes reverently going over the pages when, on a little noise, a pew

door opening and carelessly let to slam back, he mechanically raised his head; a sudden change passed over his countenance; the interior, dead to the outside world expression faded, and a keen, living, and intensely surprised and startled look, took its place. Mr. Kent, Mrs. Spafford, Leo and Clara were coming up the aisle. Michael Bryan laid down his prayer-book on the seat beside him, took off his spectacles, nervously polished them with the corner of his wife's shawl, put them on again, and looked sharply, scrutinizingly, at the group; presently he rose and motioned Mr. Kent to him.

"Here," he whispered, "bring Mrs. Spafford to our place; she will not have to wait so long, and kneel here yourself. Catharine and I can wait."

Mr. Kent was going to remonstrate, but with a peremptory shake of his head and a terrible scowl he silenced him. "There now," he said, after seeing them settled, "that looks more like it."

As farther down he again opened his prayer-book, two great tears rolled over his cheeks and fell upon its pages. Again the spectacles were removed, re-polished and replaced. His hands, hard and brown with labor, trembled, his breathing was short and hurried. Little, ejaculatory prayers escaped his lips, such as: "Praises to the good God," "Oh, this is a wonderful blessing," "But I didn't think

it; no, no, I didn't," "Glory forever to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost," and he reverently blessed himself and raised his eyes with that touching piety which goes so to the heart of the beholder, and rouses in him a corresponding glow of fervor and devotion. And yet, in the present case, his fervor and devotion did not lead him to the duty he came there to perform: self-examination, cries for pardon, purposes of amendment, and humble accusation to the anointed of the Lord. With the most unbounded gratitude to our dear Lord in his heart, an exalted feeling of piety thrilling every fibre of his being, was a thorough, disturbed and distracted state of mind. Mrs. Spafford's sudden and unexpected appearance in the house of God awoke the thoughts that had been comfortably set to rest. Her staying away from church, her non-approaching the sacraments, her stern reserve, her dark and sullen gloom, the wretchedness that shained her to so terrible an isolation, and made her a stranger in her father's home, had been accounted for; and although there was a fearful and soul sickening shadow of past crime and coming retribution enveloping the reason of the strange, mysterious change in her, still it removed suspense and left a certainty to rest upon. And Michael Bryan was not one to balance himself on the brink of a question - he plunged at once to the bottom

and brought up the answer, whatever it was. If pleasant, all right; if the reverse, he was not so weak nerved as not to be able to look it unflinchingly, it might be even defiantly, in the face. He had not been in the world nearly fifty years without learning a little of the ups and downs of life, and of the black clouds, heavy with storm and tempest, that now and then obscure the fairest sky. For Mrs. Spafford's sorrows he had the liveliest sympathy; but when he saw her so changed, and with her change such an unnatural hardness and sternness about her, he asked himself in amazement what it meant; and, unlike Clara when she put the same question to herself, he found an answer to the enigma. It was a fearful one, one that made his heart thrill, and his brain reel; but he braced himself up after the first shock, and terrible as it was, tried to look it calmly in the face. He wanted if possible to find it wrong. Priding himself on his sagacity and natural sharpness of vision, he now, for the first time in his life, wanted to find cause to doubt the one and mistrust the other; he was crushed with an overwhelming grief when he found he could not. When Egan and his friend went with them that mysterious journey west, he said to himself, "It's all over; the grave may now be dug." There was the calmness of numbing despair in his heart, the glow of it

in his eye, the rigidity of it in his face. He watched and waited like one counting the ticking minutes till the blow of the executioner falls, and the last gasp is over. Their return made a diversion, but it was only slight, and in no way changed the nature of the terrible answer. The truth of Hascall's remarks, that Egan was the best criminal lawyer in the State, was confirmed; he had taken advantage of some technical flaw, or it—he never even to himself could say what—was done in self-defense; or, by long continued ill usage, insanity had been induced, and irresponsibility with it. The papers that reached their quiet, out-of-the-way village, were silent about it, but there might be others filled with all its glaring details. Through Egan she was saved from the fatal consequences, and her life could not again be put in jeopardy. But the remorse still preyed upon her; wretchedness claimed her as its own, and made her life a living death. That she did not go to church, did not approach the sacraments, kept aloof from all sympathy, and spread an icy barrier between her and intercourse with any one around her, no longer surprised him. Burdened as she was, and determined to escape justice, how could it be otherwise? With a heavy heart, an intense aversion for the poor woman, and a lively pity and commiseration for her father, the great and noble Felix

Kent, he accepted the situation as it was, and neither looked nor hoped for a change. But a change had come, a change so sudden, so unexpected that his equanimity was disturbed, his forces all routed. In place of the old, dull, apathetic sorrow, was a wild tumultuous joy. Somewhere, in the confusion of his mind, he did not pause to consider where, he had made a false reckoning, his figures were all wrong, the sum total at the bottom different from what it should be. With the same readiness as before, he again jumped to a conclusion. Mrs. Spafford was not the conscience-haunted criminal he had supposed her ; neither in self-defense, nor under any other circumstance had she done it. Egan's business with them was for something else, whatever that something was, and a great weight, a heavy load was lifted from him. He reverently raised his eyes and repeated with fervent devotion, "Thanks be to God." The door leading into the vestry opened, a penitent came out, and Mrs. Spafford, calmly rising, walked in. Michael Bryan looking on again had occasion to remove his spectacles to wipe away the moisture that had gathered on them. Carefully replacing them, he partook himself with all recollection to the performance of the solemn duty that brought him there. Mrs. Bryan gave no outward sign of emotion, if we except the alternate flushes and

pallor that appeared on her face, and the eager readiness with which she obeyed her husband's orders to move farther down from the vestry door, and give up their place to Mr. Kent and his widowed daughter. With a lively recollection of the many things to attend to when she got home, of the hurry and drive she had gone through in her Saturday's work, in order to get there early and be through in good season, it was something she did not, as a general thing, like or would, as a general thing, do. She did not want to be one of the lags coming out of the church ; Michael might do as he pleased, but as for herself she did not forget that she had duties out of the church as well as in it ; she wondered what he'd think if the milk was left in the pails till the cream raised on it, if the young turkey's were not gathered up, the chickens put in the coops, but let to peep out their lives while their senseless mothers, shut out of the hen-house, went to roost on the nearest trees ; and who was there to see to the work so as to have it done for the early Mass ? There were enough there to see to it. To be sure, there were ; but would they ? that was the question. She did not want to bring false accusations against any one. God forbid that she should ; but one thing was certain, as many as there were to see to things, she knew if she were not there, they were not seen to. They needn't talk to

her, she knew how it was. When she was called to Mrs. Halloran's the time her little girl was sick, how did she find things when she got home? Had the chickens been housed, the turkey's gathered up, the hen-house shut—the milk had been strained, but had the pails been washed? No, nothing had been seen to, and no one was to blame. Such an innocent, lamb-like set, she never saw—Annie was in her room saying her prayers, knowing that Kittie was down stairs, and would have an eye to the evening chores, Kittie was in the parlor finishing the ruffling of a dress she was to wear the next day, and oblivious of every thing in the world but the fine appearance she would make in it, the boys and hired man were in the orchard inspecting the rare ripers and testing their excellence, and Michael was in the back yard, smoking his pipe and congratulating himself that every thing was going on right, when every thing was going wrong. That was the way it was, and it was a mercy with their sublime calmness there was some one to oversee and not let them go to rack and ruin. Most certainly was her presence needed at home; and when she hurried herself half to death to get through with her work so as to be in church in good time, and go to confession and be back early, she did not want to give up her place to another; no one with a particle of sense could

expect it of her. This she had said and repeated a hundred times, but to-day, with a bright winning smile, and a most obliging readiness she made way for Mr. Kent and Mrs. Spafford. The chickens, the young turkeys, the hen-house, the milk pails—all were forgotten. Her clear blue eyes rested benignly on the pale face of the widow, none of the old sharpness was in them, only a motherly tenderness. As, settled farther down, she reverently lowered them to the pages of her prayer-book, a little tremor passed over her mouth, and then, seemingly unconscious of every presence, she attended to her devotions. Once she started and "Praises be to God," escaped her lips. It was when Mrs. Spafford passed into the vestry. The next morning was clear and bright. At the early Mass the Kent pew was full; Mr. Kent, Mrs. Spafford, Leo, Clara and the children, were gathered in it. At the time of the Communion, Mrs. Spafford, with the rest, ranged herself round the altar railing. Her countenance wore its old serenity; her eyes had a gentle, uplifted expression, and her hands were folded in a resigned, peaceful manner on her breast. She looked so holy, so calm and tranquil, that one who had never seen the cold, stern demeanor could hardly have believed it possible in her, and having seen it, would now have wondered at the great change, and felt it was a

change of the Most High. Long after the Holy Sacrifice was offered up, they lingered in the church; one after another left, there were none but themselves and the Bryans there. At length there was a stir in their pew, Leo, at a sign from his father, rose, and all followed him out; Mr. Bryan hastening to the door, waited for them. Mr. Kent's mild, benignant face was lit up with a deep, quiet joy. Mr. Bryan caught his hand, and drawing him a little aside, in a low husky voice exclaimed:

"Mr. Kent, this is a happy day for you, for us all."

"It is, Michael," he answered, "a happy day. My poor child is herself again."

"Praises be to God."

Mr. Kent had passed his arm through his, and while the members of both families exchanged kindly greetings, he lingered behind.

"Will you stop and breakfast with us?" he asked, "I know you are fasting."

"Yes, we are fasting, but not to-day. To-day you want none but your own with you. I know how you feel; your hearts are full and your tongues heavy. Talk would be a trial to you, and the sight of a stranger almost unendurable."

"Why, Michael, I did not know that you understood these things so well."

"I understand may be more than you think."

Mr. Kent looked inquiringly at him. "I mean," he said, answering his glance, "that I have not forgotten the dark pages in my own life."

"But surely you and yours are no strangers to us, and would not be looked on in that light."

"That may be—not by you, certainly; but remember her. She must get used to her new feeling first and then used to us. At present, long as you've been here, she hardly knows us."

"You are right, I will not farther urge you. But, Michael, you and Catharine must not stay away. As you were true to us in our sorrow, so you must continue true in our joy."

Mr. Bryan, in reply, grasped his hand and warmly pressed it. He could not speak, but walked on in silence till they reached the gate leading into Mr. Kent's; there, with another silent pressure of the hand, they parted.

Breakfast over, Mr. Kent repaired to the study and soon the family followed him.

"I was reading," he said, looking up with his gentle smile, "a little out of the blessed Francis de Sales' Treatise on the Love of God."

"Some of those chapters that treat of his loving patience and forbearance?" Mrs. Spafford asked.

"Yes, my child," he answered, "and his great and wonderful mercy."

"Then, father, let me take the book and read them aloud. We all want to hear it, for we all feel it."

"Certainly, most certainly we do," he answered, reaching the volume to her.

She seated herself beside him, and in a touchingly sweet voice read page after page, pausing now and then to let the words sink deeper into the listeners' hearts; for from the ear to the heart the blessed words passed.

Clara was seated near the open window; there was a subdued, grateful look on her face, and as her eyes turned to her brother, they suddenly filled, and large tears rolled over her cheeks. It was so hard for her to keep down her joy—to see her sister sitting there with such a happy glow on her pale face, such a kindly bearing, so interested in everything around her, so peaceful and resigned—in fine, so changed, so wonderfully changed, was enough to fill her heart to overflowing with love and gratitude to our dear Lord. What Leo had told her had been so terrible; it was, unless there was some uplifting of the great load pressing upon her, some turn in the worn current of her sombre thoughts; death would soon close the scene; that he stood ready, with drawn scythe, to strike her down, and he saw no way to avert the fatal blow. Neither did Clara, only by prayer, and to it she

recoursed with redoubled fervor. To have her poor sister go so unprepared before her Judge, to know that her sorrows here were only a foretaste of greater hereafter, was most harrowing to every feeling of her soul. Death under any circumstance, is painful to the bereaved, but with the blessed hope of reunion beyond the grave, and with the belief that with the loved one all is well, we are comforted and supported. Earth may seem very lone and desolate, but heaven seems nearer, and turning from the one we reach out lovingly to the other. With Clara it was different; no ray from the tomb enlivened her; gloomy the path leading to it, and shrouded in midnight blackness the way beyond it. No wonder she had been cast down, that her cheek lost its bloom, and her eye its brightness; and no wonder now, in the happy change in her sister, her heart trembled and fluttered in the excess of its joy. After one of Mrs. Spafford's impressive pauses, Leo spoke :

"Florence, we could listen to you all day; but you have read enough, you will get tired, you must rest."

She looked up and smiled, a smile so full of humble, winning gentleness. How much she seemed the Florence of olden time, the Florence he remembered and loved so well.

"I do not feel at all tired," she said, "these

blessed words are like the manna of the wilderness ; sweet and refreshing, they strengthen instead of wearying. Father, will you want the book any more to-day ?”

“ No, my child, the memory of what you have read will do me to rest on the whole day.”

“ Then I will take it to my room.”

“ Certainly. You will not go to High Mass ?”

“ I think not, father,” Leo answered for her, “ she is not able ; the lengthened service will be too much for her,” then turning to Mrs. Spafford, he added, “ you must go to your room and lie down ; you need to, it will do you good.”

“ It will not pain you to stay at home ?” he asked, fancying a shade passed over her face.

“ Oh, no,” she answered, “ you know I will not be alone.” She meant that as she had been to communion that morning our dear Lord would be with her ; but Clara took it another way, and promptly and good-naturedly exclaimed, “ No, you will not be alone, for I will stay too. Father, you and Leo and the boys must go without us.”

Mrs. Spafford rose to leave the room, and Clara rose, too. Mr. Kent’s mild, benignant eyes followed them to the door : “ What a blessed child she is,” she remarked to Leo when they were alone.”

“ Clara !”

“ Yes, I always knew she possessed a kind heart,

but I never dreamed of the depth of her goodness till these trials came. What a support and comfort she has been ; may God's blessing rest on her."

"Father, do you know I used to think you blind in your fond partiality for her. More than once I have said to myself, 'he can't see her faults, he thinks she has none, and she is full of vanity and conceit.'"

"Vanity, Leo?"

"Yes, father. Not the usual vanity of her sex, but that monstrous vanity which is generally called pedantry, and of all vanity, the most offensive, especially in a woman."

"I don't know why 'especially in a woman,' Leo."

"Simply because it gives a swaggering effrontery to them. She had such an exalted opinion of her abilities, prided herself so much on them, and had such a *penchant* for scribbling, that I used to greatly fear for her, and be more than provoked at you that you did not restrain her a little. She would listen to nothing I could say ; in your hands she was putty, to mold as you pleased."

Mr. Kent smiled. "Did it never occur to you that you, too, had your faults?" he quietly asked.

"Of course, father ; I knew, I know, I am not perfect. But I hardly think you can rank pedantry among them."

"What about censoriousness?"

"You thought me too severe and exacting?"

"No, not exactly that; but while she was, maybe, a little conceited in her way, you were no better in yours. Her conceit hurts yours; that was the reason it annoyed you so much. I look on her reading, studying and writing, as something that would amuse her for the present, keep her out of mischief, as they say about children, and lay up a store of good and useful lessons for the future. Instead of carelessly passing over what she read, her habit of writing, even if what she wrote was crude and not of much weight—and, from her years, how could it be otherwise—would fasten what she read in her mind, and knowing well the books I put in her hands, I did not fear the result. You see I was right."

"Yes, father, her mind is well stored, her memory prodigious."

"And you do not now think her vain?"

"Ah, but I do. She is an odd compound. I can hardly make her out."

"I can," replied the fond father.

"Then tell me what she is."

"The best child in the world. Leo, you have a noble sister."

Leo smilingly answered, "I know it, father, a noble sister, but I am sorry she still clings so

tenaciously to those learned articles of hers. I wish I dared tell her to burn them up and think no more of them."

"She has spoken then to you about them?"

"Yes."

"You said nothing to grieve or wound her feelings?"

"No, no, not the first word."

"You think she improves?"

"Well, yes, if she would not get such out-of-the-way subjects. One of the last ones is 'Proofs that the Aborigines of America are Descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel.'"

"Yes, I know, and what do you think of it?" There was a very faint appearance of a smile on the mild, grave features of Felix Kent.

"Think of it! why, with all the authority at her elbow, that she rather made good her points. But of what earthly significance to the general reader is it, whether they are or not? What will they care for it, or for the labor she has gone through with it. The very name is enough to frighten one not a book-worm like herself, to turn from it, and go to something more to the taste of ordinary mortals."

"I see she has condemned a number of her earliest articles, burnt some of them, I believe."

"Yes, and I would not care if she burned the whole of them."

"You surely don't mean her later ones?"

"No, father; some of them have considerable merit—more, a great deal more, than I expected to find. When she allows herself to be natural, she has a pleasant, sprightly way, but when she mounts her stilts she stalks about in a most tragic style. I endeavored to impress upon her that simplicity is the surest mark of excellence, and in proof of my assertion referred her to her beloved Liguori, Fenelon, Rollin, Thomas à Kempis, and other of her favorite authors."

"She took your words kindly?"

"Yes, and thanked me for them. She was beginning to awaken to the fact herself."

"Ah, I knew sooner or later she would."

"But, father, you should have told her before." There was a slight tone of reproach in his voice.

Mr. Kent, calmly looking at him, mildly replied: "You don't know her, Leo. It would have broken her heart had I found fault with them. I could not do it; secure in her drawer, it was of little consequence whether they were turgid or not. Long before she got enough to fill that octavo she thinks of with so much pleasure, I knew her mind would open to their defects, and her style be greatly improved."

With a smile Leo answered : " But, father, the octavo was too much for her ; she told me she had given it up, and only aspired to a 12mo. That she has also now resigned."

" And don't she intend to ever have them published ?"

" Oh, yes, certainly. She would not deem her mission fulfilled if she allowed them 'to blush unseen and waste their sweetness on the desert air'—that is, molder away in her drawer. No, the world must be enlightened ; they will enlighten it, and therefore they must be presented to the world. They will make their first appearance in the pages of some of the periodicals."

" Why, who put this in her head ?"

" I did myself."

" Leo, Leo, you have been precipitate."

" No, no, father ; it's their only chance of appearing at all, unless she goes to the trouble of being her own publisher. A book of essays is not, with the rush of the present day, the most acceptable to the public. In the time of Johnson, to whom she so often refers, people had leisure and could doze over any amount of learned stupidity ; but in this age of steam and electricity, it is different. We must be wide awake, dash on, snatch up what we can carry without incommoding us too much, and let the rest go."

“That is not what I am considering.”

“But that is what must be looked at.”

“I know, I know; but, the fact is, Leo, I am not sure the poor child’s articles are exactly suitable to appear. I was going to let her write on till years and experience had enriched her mind, and polished her style. But now—O, Leo, you have been over hasty—they will not do. I know they will not, and she will be pained and mortified by their refusal. No editor will take them as they are now.”

Leo hastened to reassure him. “Father,” he said, “some of them will not certainly do, as you say; but she has several very excellent ones. I was really astonished at their depth and finish. These she is going to review; for here and there they need it, and then she will forward them to me, and I will send them on to the publisher.”

“But when they are exhausted?”

“By that time she will have more.”

“But will they carry out the promise of these?”

“I think so. Her mind is well stored with material, and she is now beginning to know how to use it.”

“And would you wish her then to write no more? If I recollect right, you expressed sorrow that she still clung so tenaciously to her learned articles.”

Leo’s laugh sounded through the study. “You think me inconsistent?” he said.

"Slightly so," was mildly answered. "It's hard, I see, for you to get over your boyish prejudices and yet you have urged her on to a step I should have not thought of. But you must wait till you are settled, and well going, before burdening yourself with them. You have your future to carve out as well as she."

"I know it father ; and sometimes I fancy great things and build the finest castles out of Spain."

Mr. Kent looked grave, and took the opportunity of preaching him a little homily on not allowing his mind to dwell too much on wordly fame and greatness, and of striving to do good and lay up treasures where the moth cannot consume nor the violent bear away ; on the shortness of time, the certainty of death, and the length of eternity—none of which was new to Leo. Hundreds of times had he listened to similar discourses, and always with the same respectful attention. The tone of sincerity dwelt in his father's words, real piety shone on his venerable face. Felix Kent, revered abroad for his christian charity and benevolence, was loved at home for his unaffected goodness. The reins of government in his hands were firmly held ; but gentleness so tempered his authority that they hardly felt it. His wishes were to be studied, his taste consulted, his suggestions carried out. Going against them was not thought of in that household.

With Leo, it was only rendering the obedience and respect due to a parent ; with Clara, it was taking care of her father, and seeing to his comfort. Monstrous would it have seemed to her, had he in any way been neglected, or his slightest wish not strictly attended to. She looked up to him as to a superior being ; his wisdom was undoubted, his judgment correct, his piety the most exalted, his kindness the most genuine, his goodness the most real. She could not do enough for him, or too carefully watch over him, and see that he wanted for nothing. While he regarded her as the blessing of God to his old age, she looked upon him as the visible representation of her good angel.

But while the father and son talked of her and her learned articles, they were silent about the happy change in her sister. It filled them with a quick joy and lifted their hearts in gratitude to God ; but there were passages in her shrouded past deeply painful and humiliating to them, and which roused in them both passions that it was their duty as Christians to keep down and restrain, and, referring to the changes, brought up these passages with thrilling distinctness before them. Clara knew nothing of them, but to Leo the father had revealed all. There was pattering of feet in the passage, and one of the boys appeared at the door, hat and prayer-book in hand.

"Grandfather, and Uncle Leo, it is time we were starting to church. It's going to half-past ten," he said.

"Yes, my child, I know it," Mr. Kent answered, rising, "but where is Theodore?"

"He is here, all ready to go; he has got yours and Uncle Leo's hats." Taking them from the children's hands, and each leading one of the dear little fellows, they left the study, and passed down the walk and joined the throng wending their way to the house of God.

In a fortnight, Leo left home for the west, and the children returned to school. Clara wept bitterly at parting from them, but her heart was not so lone and desolate as it was the year before. Florence was herself again, kind, gentle, and endearing in her thoughtful care for all. Oh, the great, the wonderful power of prayer, and the ever enduring mercy of God, who hears and answers it.

CHAPTER XX.

A YEAR passed, bringing with it its changes. Leo was settled in his western home, and was enjoying an extensive and lucrative practice; several of Clara's article had appeared in one of the leading magazines, and were much admired. As they

were forwarded to the publisher by her brother, and were signed by a *nom de plume*, the initials of which happened to correspond with the initials of her brother's name, they were generally attributed to him. Several papers spoke confidentially of their being the production of a talented young physician, "resident of one of our western cities." This delighted Clara; no encomium pronounced upon them could have pleased her more. In the first place, it was a just punishment for the contumely he had expressed for her learned labors, that he now had to bear the blushing honors of paternity to her learned articles. She wrote him a letter rippling over with laughing, grateful triumph, and he answered it as the son of the saintly Felix Kent would, gently, kindly and affectionately. He was willing the mistake should stand; for notwithstanding present praise, if a censure should fall upon her future ones, he felt he was better able to bear it. But under her enjoyment of their being attributed to Leo was another feeling no less pleasing, and a great deal more flattering. That masculine strength of mind she had once prided herself on possessing, and which she had not yet entirely relinquished, seemed now fresh, and without asking accorded to her. Jerome Hascall was enthusiastic about them, and Clara listened with commendable silence to his glowing

tribute of praise. She did not make a confident of his sister or speak a word of her pleasure at his appreciative powers to the Bryan girls, or even to Mrs. Spafford, but she once remarked to her father that Jerome Hascall was certainly a far more intelligent and well-informed person than she once thought him. And his intelligence and full and varied information would have been a subject for frequent thought, only she was too busy tending to her household duties and preparing new articles for the press, to more than give them a passing notice. Mrs. Spafford's health was so much improved that she was able to help the girl in the kitchen, so Clara's household duties, only extended to the chambers and clothes. The former she kept in neatness, and the latter were carefully looked over and, if broken, carefully mended. Just before Lent, Kittie Bryan and Seth Maxwell were married, and went at once to house-keeping in the village, near his father's, and a tidier, happier house-keeper than Kittie never existed. A few weeks after her marriage, Annie opened to her parents the dearest wish of her heart. It was a clear, cold Sunday morning, after coming home from church, that she broached the subject to them. In the warm, comfortable sitting-room, looking out on the snow-covered fields, and rubbing his hands in an enjoyable manner, Mr. Bryan remarked :

"Well, Catharine, I am glad the fuss of the wedding is over, and that Kittie is so well settled."

Annie completely upset him by quietly saying, "And, father, wouldn't you be glad to see me settled to."

"Settled!" he exclaimed, turning sharply upon her.

"Yes, father," she replied, "you and mother rejoice in Kittie doing so well, and would you not be glad to see me doing better."

"Doing better! Why what on earth does the girl mean?" Mrs. Bryan, perfectly bewildered, asked.

Annie burst into tears. "Mother," she sobbed, "I want to be a Sister, to dedicate my life to the service of God. Don't refuse to let me, don't."

Mr. and Mrs. Bryan were painfully surprised. This was the first they had heard of it, and yet they might have known it. There was that about Annie that might have revealed to them that the portion of Mary, not Martha, had been given to her. But they had never heeded it, and now it fell heavily upon them. Self got the mastery of their fervid piety and, just parting with Kittie, they asked themselves how they could give her up; her mother would then be alone, with no daughter to cheer her old age. No, no, it could not be; she must not think of it; she must stay at home; there

was her place, and there it was her duty to be. This sounded plausible, and poor Annie was silenced and had nothing to say. But she was not turned from her desire, she only watched and bided her time; it was not long. The matter reaching Clara Kent's ears, she rushed with her usual impetuosity to the rescue. She took Mr. and Mrs. Bryan aside, and the first question she put to them was the portentous one: were they Christian parents? Receiving an answer in the affirmative, she begged then to know why they demurred to Annie's becoming a religious. The answer was given, "Because if she went, her mother would be left alone."

"Very true, Mr Bryan," she said, seating herself, for till now she had remained standing; "very true; Annie could not be very well here and in her convent home at the same time. But," she asked, turning her clear, bright eyes to Mrs. Bryan, "if a wealthy suitor came to claim her hand, would you allow your loneliness to stand between her and an advantageous settlement in life? Would you not be proud and labor with all your heart and both your hands to help the match along? and now will you refuse to God what you would readily enough grant to man? He has bestowed upon Annie the priceless gift of a religious vocation. He has called her to be His, to devote her life to the doing

for his poor, suffering children, and you and her father, in your intense selfishness, draw back and will not let her go."

Mrs. Bryan gasped and looked frightened. Clara had such a way of putting a question that it took away her breath and made her feel faint and weak. Mr. Bryan understood it better.

"I doubt," he said, drumming with his stiff, jointy fingers on the table, "if our dear Lord demands such a sacrifice of us."

"Sacrifice!" He was instantly asked if he considered it a sacrifice.

"Why no, no, Miss Clara ; but you see it's hard to think of her leaving us."

"Harder to think of than Kittie leaving you, Mr. Bryan?"

"But she can come and see us, and we can go and see her."

"So you could Annie, go as often as you like."

"But both to go and leave the house so lone?"

"You had them both in school, and did not feel so bad about it."

"But they were to come back again, and we knew it."

"No, you did not know it ; you were not at all sure of it. Sickness and death might have come upon them, and before you could have got to them they might have been gone. Here, you know, we

have no abiding-place; we cannot tell how long we will stay, or when we will be called to go."

"True, true," Mrs. Bryan assenting, murmured.

But Mr. Bryan straightened himself in his chair, "Would your father be willing," he asked, "to give you, or Leo, or both of you up?" He flattered himself he now had a question as good and telling as any of her own. Too truthful to resort to a subterfuge, he expected to see her stammer, blush and look confused. He was never more disappointed in his life. She rose up, a beautiful glow spread over her clear cheek, a softened light beamed from her dark, gray eye.

"Mr. Bryan," she said, and there was a touching earnestness in the low, thrilling tones of her voice, "if he were so highly favored, do you think *my* father would refuse? Would he not raise both hands, and praise God who had bestowed so signal a blessing on his children? Don't you know my father? don't you know Felix Kent?"

Mr. Bryan was completely overcome. He looked at his wife and submissively said, "If Annie wants to go, I'll not be the one to object."

"Nor I, Michael," she humbly answered. "We have been selfish and ungrateful too. Annie shall go, and I will do my best to help her get ready. To-morrow we will speak to Father Doyle about applying for her."

Clara heartily shook Mr. Bryan's hand, and threw her arms round Mrs. Bryan's neck and kissed her. The matter was settled. A few weeks after, Annie bade adieu to the world. Her parents missed her presence at home, but conscious of the good she was doing they cheerfully resigned themselves to her absence. Two more years passed, and Christine Hascall had followed Annie Bryan's example and dedicated her life to the service of God in religion. The poor and feeble round her home were not allowed to miss her, for Clara Kent took them under her care. A faithful and efficient friend, nurse and guide she was. She might lack Christine's touching gentleness and unwearied patience, but she in some measure made up for it by her untiring energy. If she came in contact with one who, instead of laboring to support his family by the sweat of his brow, was doing his best to sit for the picture of the sluggard, "was sleeping a little, slumbering a little, folding his hands a little," while want as a traveller, and poverty as an armed man, were coming upon him, she did not sigh, look grieved as if a personal injury had been inflicted upon her, and try gently and timidly to rouse him up to see his danger. She dashed right into the business at once. Was he sick? Without hesitation she ordered what he must take. He was weak, his laziness came from that ; he must be

braced up, and the bitterest of bitter tonics was he made to swallow. Was he well, perfectly well, but not feeling exactly right? that was because he had no regular work. Idle hands and a vacant mind were enough to kill any one; he must go to work. Employment was obtained him, and he had to accept it. She hut-tutted, frowned, and scolded down any opposition; she praised ready acceptance, and in either case helped and encouraged them along, by her cheerful, hopeful words and ways. Active and buoyant herself, she could not endure languor and timidity in others; but she possessed too much real benevolence to be harsh or imperious in her denunciations against them. She looked upon harshness and imperiousness as most offensive to God and most hateful to man. As much as she disliked the languor and timidity of sloth, she held in still greater detestation the heartless rudeness and savage authority of pride. In an earnest, hearty way, she tried to do good and was happy when she felt she succeeded. If she harbored an exalted opinion of her abilities, she did not show it by a lofty carriage, or a dainty easily offended dignity. Never slow to do a favor herself, she never dreamed her dignity, or the dignity of any one else, was hurt by asking a favor in return. If after doing she asked, and was refused, as on several occasions happened, she did

not break her heart over it, but relieved herself with an article on the 'Pernicious Effects of Pride, and the Ingratitude it Engenders.' Her own personal experience never being allowed to shade it, and only serving to fill her mind with ideas on the subject, a clear, passionless discrimination marked its style.

From that night of tearful watching and prayer Mrs. Spafford was her gentle, loving self, and Clara's deep pity was changed to a reverent and devoted affection. She was so good, so patient, so pious. Frail and fragile in appearance, she never complained of ill-health, and was always busy either sewing, reading, writing to her children, or engaged in some household labor. She did not go out much, but when she did, a sweet placidity marked her bearing ; if her words were few, they were always kind, sensible and to the point. Mr. and Mrs. Bryan often to themselves spoke of the blessed change in her, and still to them it was a mystery why her sorrow and bereavement had had such a strange effect upon her ; a hundred reasons were brought forward, but not one of them was tenable. If they could have let the matter rest, and been satisfied with the happy turn of affairs, they would have been better pleased with themselves ; but it had taken such a strong hold on their minds that they found it impossible to let the

matter drop. More than once, Mr. Bryan remarked to his wife : " Catharine, I don't know why, but I feel certain the end is not yet ; that some time or other it will all come out," and with a frightened look and a sinking at her heart, Mrs. Bryan would respond, " Yes, Michael, it will come out, whoever lives to see it." She did not dare to say more, though more surged to her mind. The shrouded past laid bare, how would it reflect on that pale, tranquil woman, still wearing her widow's weeds ? Not disagreeably ? No, oh, no. A glance at her pure face and heaven-beaming eyes declared it. But how would it be with others ? Would the dead be left to rest in peace in the grave ? Would obloquy be heaped on dry bones and a handful of dust ? Oh, it was terrible to think of ; she always supposed that the grave closed over all sores and injuries, so far as this world was concerned ; that bitterness doffed its crown of wormwood, and turned with respectful deference to the little mound of perishing humanity. Would it be so in the case of Homer Spafford ? She did not know ; Michael, with his usual clearness, could not tell her ; he was as much in the dark as herself, Leo made such strange remarks to Michael, one day, that he happened to speak of the children. They were at home, for it was in the vacation time, and with several other boys were playing ball in the orchard.

Michael and Leo were under one of the trees at a little distance from them, watching their sport, and seeing them look so happy. Michael said :

“What a blessing for the fatherless boys that they have such a kind grandfather ; under his thoughtful care they can hardly realize their loss.”

“Loss !” Leo scornfully repeated, “I tell you, Mr. Bryan,” he excitedly exclaimed, “it is a gain, not a loss to them, and the providence of God over them, that snatched them from his corrupting care.” What he said might be true enough, but it hurt Michael’s feelings to hear him refer so to one that was gone ; and gently as his temper would let him, he told him it didn’t become a Christian to speak so of one who had passed to judgment ; that whatever his faults were, he should be let alone ; that it was cruel and unnatural to pile up hatred against the dead. Michael did not answer for several moments, and when he did speak, he did not know what to make of his words. “I pile up no hatred against the dead,” he said, “I try my best to guard myself, lest hatred and ill-will should steal into my heart against the living. I say it again, and I say it not in malice, it is a blessing for those pure-minded, innocent boys that they are rescued from their father’s corrupting care.” And then he begged of Michael as a favor that he would never in the most remote manner refer to him

again, because he said the name of Homer Spafford had a deadly sound to his ear and brought a terrible sting to his heart. Michael was fairly startled, there was something so deep and awful in his voice and manner. He said he didn't heap up hatred against the dead, and surely one would not suppose him the one to do it, but there was nothing black or vindictive about him; as a general thing, he was like his father, so full of charity that he thought everybody better than they really were, but in this particular case there was something that, if it was not hatred, it certainly very nearly approached to it. Michael didn't know what to call it; he didn't know what it meant. It was no slight thing that could so change the whole current of his nature; it was something uprooting in its depth, and blasting in its power. But what? what could it be that could so master death, and hold the grave in subjection? Impossible to say. At present, all about it was dark, unfathomed, mysterious; but by-and-by the thick curtain would be lifted, and the unreadable scroll be made manifest.

Two more years rolled on; it was the second week in August; Leo, who had been to his father's for a few weeks, was going to return to his western home. George Bryan, just admitted to the Bar, was to accompany him, also young Hascall; the former, like Leo, thought of settling there, the

latter merely went for the pleasure of the trip. The adieus had been gone through with, and they were on their way to Livy to take the cars. Mr. Bryan was unusually silent as they rode along, but Jerome, seated on the seat with him, had a great many remarks to make.

"I declare," he exclaimed, looking over his shoulder at the young men back, "I think your father need have no fear. Here we are starting for the west, and if there comes a smash up, as in all probability there will, the doctor here," nodding to Leo, "can whip out his lancet, put on his wise look, and finish with professional grace what the accident has failed to do. If there's a will to be drawn in a hurry, George is the one to do it." Glancing at him, "your pen, ink-horn, and foolscap **must** be kept in readiness. Mind what I tell you; I am an old traveller, and I know a little of these things."

The young men smiled, Mr. Bryan looked grave.

"But supposing the Doctor was one of the victims," Leo remarked.

"And the lawyer, with his pen, ink-horn and foolscap, another?" added George. Mr. Bryan groaned and Hascall laughed.

"Then, indeed," he exclaimed, "would there be some hope for the poor passengers. Having got

through one catastrophe, and escaping another, they would stand a small chance for their lives."

Mr. Bryan could no longer hold his peace. 'Boys,' he entreated, "don't be joking about such things. It makes my blood run cold to hear you."

"Mr. Bryan, we are not jesting," Hascall speaking for the others, answered. "We are very serious; you know accidents are every day occurring, and I was merely—"

"Will you stop," Mr. Bryan sternly exclaimed.

"Of course I will stop. I will not say another word, only if any thing does happen, I promise you as I am with them, to let you know it as soon as possible."

Jerome Hascall's countenance wore a look of the most commendable gravity, but his eye twinkled, and his voice, which he intended should be grave too, had the shake of laughter in it.

"As long," he continued, "as your father, George, will not let me dwell on the accidents of travelers, to please him I will pass on to other and livelier matters; and now let me ask, have you noticed those splendid metallic coffins at Case's."

"Yes, I saw them. One hundred and fifty dollars a piece," answered the young lawyer, having a sharp way of finding out the dollar and cents side of a question.

"And what a splendid monument old Brown is

getting of the purest Italian marble, seventy feet high and costing I can't tell you how many thousand. They got it up yesterday, and I declare the old gentleman looked as if it was almost a pleasure for fathers to outlive their sons, in order to see that their memory was duly honored."

Mr. Bryan did not now tell him to stop, but it seemed he was determined he should. He whipped up the horses, and as they sped rapidly along, in a loud, quick voice put question after question to Leo about the state of agriculture in the west, and the breaking up of the heavy-soiled prairies. Leo entered with spirit into the business of talking down and silencing the lugubrious remarks of the fun-loving Hascall. Arriving in Livy, their tickets bought and baggage attended to, Mr. Bryan devoted the few moments before the train came in, to giving a last injunction to his son.

"Be sure and let us hear from you as soon as possible, your mother will be worried till she knows you are all right." He did not say he would himself be uneasy. In these days of rushing hither and thither, and thinking nothing of a ride of several hundred miles over thick and thin, it would make him appear like an old fossil of the last geological formation to show any fear or concern, or to look on the starting out from the paternal home, to seek a fortune in the world in any other light than an

every-day occurrence. He had felt a lump in his throat all the morning, and since Hascall's remarks, added to the lump was a weak fluttering at his heart. He wished he was over the journey, and he held the letter from him in his hand, telling of his safe arrival in Leo's western home. It was foolish to let what Hascall said affect him so; there was no danger, none in the least, and he would keep up a brave heart and not let himself, like a fool, be cast down. He rose from his chair, straightened himself and commenced walking up and down the porch in front of the station-house, in a stiff, independent and careless manner. He talked in an animated voice to a neighboring farmer that happened to be present, on the weather, the crops and the probable price they would bring. "Yes, he is going, going in the next train," he said, in answer to a direct question on the matter; and then, as if it hardly claimed a passing notice, he was off again to the crops, bewailing the damage the weevil had done to the wheat. Train after train had come in and gone, and there had been a constant rush back and forth of the passengers, but Mr. Bryan had hardly seemed to see or notice them. At last one came shrieking and thundering in, a train that sent every vestige of color from his face. He paused in his striding walk and looked at his son.

"It is the one, George," he said.

"Yes, father," he answered, taking his hand, "I am off now ; and tell mother to keep up good courage ; in two or three days I will write."

His father squeezed his hand. "God bless and prosper you," he exclaimed in an unsteady voice. Then shaking hands with Leo and Hascall, he hastily walked into the room.

On his way home that afternoon he tried to shake off the chill-foreboding feeling that had come over him. He looked at the fields he passed, at the grand old hills rising on all sides, at the hazy sky and curtained sun ; he listened to the rippling murmur of the creek running just back of the road, to the still small voice of the wind, and the lone chirping of the birds that had seemingly forgotten the gay notes with which they had heralded in the spring. But with all his endeavors, his heart was heavy, and an indefinable fear weighed him down. This feeling clung to him the whole of the next day. He went into the fields, but for once his work had no interest for him ; his will was weak and faltering. Towards the close of the day, he and his hired man were startled by the sudden appearance of Mrs. Bryan. She had forgotten to put on her sun-bonnet, and her hair was flying in wild confusion round her face ; her eyes had a strained and

frightened look. Mr. Bryan's arms fell to his side, and he stood, unable to speak or move.

"Michael," she exclaimed, out of breath, and in a hurried husky voice, "the man from the telegraph brought me this," showing a slip of paper, "there's been a very bad accident on the train George was in, and we are sent for." She trembled all over. But with a terrible calmness, she added, "we must start to-night. Kittie can be sent for, and she'll see to things."

Mr. Bryan moved one foot forward, then the other. He could stir; he was not rooted to the ground, and without a word followed her to the house.

Mr. Kent also at the same time received a dispatch, and that evening he and Mrs. Spafford, Mr. and Mrs. Bryan started for the west.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE next issue of the papers came filled with the news of a "shocking railroad accident. Five persons killed and twenty wounded." Such was the startling heading and then followed the particulars. The 4 30 p. m. passenger train from Erie to Kalamazoo was run into at Marshall by a freight train, which had flagged from Erie. Five passengers

were killed and twenty wounded, some, it is feared, fatally. At the time the train left the names of the killed and wounded were not ascertained. A second despatch gave them, and among the latter appeared the names of Leo Kent, M. D., and George Bryan. Jerome Hascall had escaped, and it was he that telegraphed to Mr. Kent and Mr. Bryan, and had the young men conveyed to one of the parlors on the second floor of the principal hotel of the place. For several days their physician could not with certainty pronounce upon their case. If the fever could be kept off, then all would be right ; if not—and he shook his head. Jerome never left them for a moment's rest till their friends arrived, but watched over them with the most devoted attention. When Mr. Kent and Mr. Bryan reached the village he tried to make the first meeting as little exciting as possible to both parties. After that was got over, and he felt he could with safety leave them, he sought his own room and threw his exhausted form upon the bed. Scarcely had his head touched the pillow before he was in a deep and dreamless sleep. While George and Leo trembled on the verge of the grave, no one could have been more prompt, energetic and thoughtful than Mr. Bryan. It seemed there was no such thing as giving way to his powers of endurance. Mrs. Spafford, Mrs. Bryan, Mr. Kent and even

young Hascall became ciphers in the sick room. He took the whole charge of it, and kept everyone else at a respectful distance. Waving off with an exasperating curtness any assistance from others, with what a benignant tenderness he turned to them. His voice, sour and grim to even the saintly Felix Kent, how soft and soothing when addressing his patients. They were his, no one's else. and that everybody was given distinctly to understand. But the great danger past, convalescence happily setting in, there was a change. He became restless, could hardly sit still, George or Leo needed raising up or laying back on the pillows; there was either not air enough, and the windows must be lowered more and the door thrown wider open, or there was too great a draft, and the windows must be raised and the door closed; their beds needed seeing to, the sheets smoothed, the light spread straightened. Then there were numberless errands on tip-toe across the floor, a buzzing fly that might disturb them to drive out, or a bumble-bee to battle with; his weapon a stiff, crackling newspaper, whisked and fluttered round in the most nerve-distracting manner, or their powders and potions were to be carefully assorted, or a word whispered into the ear of Mr. Kent or Hascall, or Mrs. Bryan, or Mrs. Spafford, as to the probability of a relapse, and the certain danger at

tending it, the whisper so shrill and distinct that every syllable was sure to reach the ear of the invalids. Hascall felt this would be enough to draw on the dreaded relapse; never sick himself, with fine instinct he realized the wants of the sick, and how irritating the nervous restlessness of the poor, over-taxed father must be to George and Leo, and he drew him from the sick room to take walks, call on the other sick ones in the village, and busy himself about the soil and lay of the country around them. Day after day winged its slow flight, and still George and Leo were confined to their room. Mr. Bryan never complained of weariness, but occupied himself in sending home letters, ordering how things were to be managed till his and Mrs. Bryan's return, and learning the history of every other victim of the railroad accident in the place, and carrying the same to the pleasant airy parlor of his boy. A number had been removed to their homes, several had died, but four or five still remained. Among these was a middle-aged gentleman that Mr. Bryan had not been allowed to see. The reason given was, the paroxysms he was thrown into at the sight of any other than his nurse and physician. He could not possibly recover, suffered terribly, and at times was out of his head and talked strangely. Mr. Bryan daily passed his door, which was generally open, and peered anxiously in ;

he saw nothing to satisfy his curiosity, for a large screen shaded his bed from view. But one morning as he was passing he heard words that rooted him to the spot. The patient was raving wildly, and refusing the medicine the nurse was trying to make him swallow.

"Take it away," he screamed. "Will it bring peace of mind? will it blot out the black and damning past? Felix Kent, you are revenged. Florence, you may look on me now, and feel repaid for all I made you suffer."

Unheeding his words the nurse placed the spoon to his lips.

"Swallow it, Mr. Milton," with firm and gentle authority, she said; "it will help and do you good."

He snatched the spoon from her hand and hurled it across the room. "Mr. Milton to me," he savagely exclaimed, "Call me by my name. Accursed as I am, it is still mine. Homer Spafford, that is my name, that is the name the devils know me by, and will hiss into my ears with exultant joy." He fell back, exhausted on the pillow, and the nurse turned shudderingly away to pick up the spoon. Mr. Bryan leaned heavily against the door-case, large drops stood on his forehead and his face was deadly pale. The woman looked at him, and quickly handed him a glass of water.

"He is worse to-day," she whispered, glancing over her shoulder at the bed behind the screen :

"May I see him?" he hoarsely asked, and without waiting an answer, he walked in and stood beside the sick man's bed.

"It's he ! himself !" came from his pale compressed lips. The patient opened his eyes which had closed with the lethargy of fever, and started wildly up. No recognition was in his glance, but some mysterious instinct of his nature seemed touched by Mr. Bryan's presence.

"You will tell her I am here," he said, looking him vacantly in the face.

"Tell who ?" Mr. Bryan controlled himself to ask.

"Her. Now she may laugh at me as I laughed at her. O Florence ! Florence, come to me ; feast yourself with my misery, see how I suffer, and clap your hands triumphantly over the wretch that trampled upon you, and turned to scorn your tears and devotion."

"She wouldn't do it. She couldn't. She is too much of a Christian to think of it," Mr. Bryan, to save his life, could not help saying.

The sick man heeded not his remark, only the word Christian struck on his ear.

"Christian," he repeated, "Christian ; I tore that out of my heart years ago. I hated it, I mocked it ; I made her shudder and writhe with

my royal contempt of it. 'The fool has said in his heart, there is no God.' I said it, and I acted upon it. But, O God! I know there is a God. I feel it in the marrow of my bones, in every fibre of my tortured body. And there are devils, too; they glare on me; they clutch at me; they want to drag me down, down, down," he shrieked, cowering back on the bed, and burying himself in the bed-clothes.

"He's very bad to-day," said the nurse again.

"He can't get well?"

"No, the doctor says he won't last more than two or three days."

"Has he any lucid intervals?"

"Yes—oh, yes. He hasn't had a turn like this since yesterday. All last night he was quiet."

"How does he seem when he's quiet? Rational then?"

"Yes, rational, but terribly cast down. It seems to me that his raving has meaning in it, that what he speaks now he thinks then. A bad conscience, sir, is a grievous thing in health to drag round; but it's awful, it's horrible in death."

This was said a little way from the bed and in a whisper. Mr. Bryan had turned from it, and stood near one of the windows. He was trying to think what it was best for him to do, and made no answer to her remark. She sank into a chair, and

sat looking composedly at the moaning sufferer. And there lay the man Michael Bryan had long considered dead and buried, whose memory, black as it was, Death had sacredly guarded from bitterness and reproach. There he was, and in the room above was his wife in her widow's weeds. And he had thought her so hard and unforgiving, had looked on her brother as almost as hard and unforgiving as herself, had wondered, wondered so much with a wrath in his heart and the spark of it in his eye, how they could be so vindictive to the *dead*. And they were not ; all the time their bitterness was not against the *dead* but the *living*. He had ruined her father, he had led her a wretched life, he had forsaken her and her children, and left them to poverty and want. All those years he had not cared to see her, but now he called her to him. For what ? for reconciliation, for forgiveness, to show her in death he repented of his injustice to her ? No, no, no ; but that her vengeance might be glutted with the sight of his misery. Horrible ! horrible ! And what was that he was saying about divorces, and fleeing from known faces, and false names and second marriages ? for again the sick man was talking wildly, and words fell from his lips that made the soul of Michael Bryan sick and faint. No wonder Felix Kent told him nothing of all this ; no wonder his pure heart could find no

utterance for such a black, black history. What should he do? Should he bring Florence to him? Should he speak to her father and tell him the name of the dying man? He left the room stupefied and bewildered. Slowly he ascended the stairs, and walked with a heavy, lagging step to the door of Leo and George's room. "I can't go in now," he said to himself. "I must be careful and not throw it like a bombshell at their feet. It would blow them into atoms if I did." He passed the door and walked on to the end of the passage. He turned then and retraced his steps; still he could not go in, and again the door was passed. Coming back to it Mr. Kent stepped out. He had a couple of letters in his hands, he was going to the post-office.

"Why, Michael," he exclaimed, "are you sick? You look pale."

"No, Mr. Kent," he answered, "I am, thank God, well." He took hold of his arm. "You are going out," he wistfully said.

"Yes, to mail these letters. One to Clara, the dear child, and one to Mrs. Maxwell, Kittie you know I mean." They had by this time reached the stairs and Mr. Bryan leaned heavily against the balustrade.

"Michael, you are not well. Go to the boys' room and lie down on the sofa. I will be back

presently. Go, Michael, go." Mr. Kent enforced his words with a gentle pressure of his hand on Michael's shoulder.

"The fresh air will do me good. Let us hasten out," Mr. Bryan answered. "I have something to tell you," he slowly and with difficulty added.

Mr. Kent offered no further objection, and they both descended the stairs and passed into the street. Silently they wended their way to the post-office, and then Mr. Bryan said :

"Let us go and sit down under the trees there." He pointed to a handsome grove of Maple and Beech on the east side of the village. A few moments' walk brought them to it.

"There now," said Mr. Kent when they were seated, "what is it Michael you have to tell me."

"I have seen him," he remarked, in a low, mysterious tone.

"Who?"

"Why the sick man below that's going to die, that can't get well."

"Ah, poor man," Mr. Kent feelingly responded. "I suppose the death of his wife has hastened his."

"Wife!" Mr. Bryan, with infinite contempt, repeated.

"Yes, Michael," Mr. Kent in surprise rejoined.

"She was, I hear, dragged out of the ruins in a fearfully mangled state."

"Did she live long?"

"For several days."

"Did she suffer?"

• "Yes, terribly."

"She deserved to," was the harsh reply.

Mr. Kent looked up in profound amazement.

"Why Michael," he exclaimed when he could speak, "how can you say that?"

"Easy enough, Felix Kent. Do you know who she was?"

"Yes, she was wife to the poor sick man. His name is Milton, and of course was Mrs. Milton."

"His name is not Milton. It is Spafford, Homer Spafford. And she was not Mrs. Spafford. Mrs. Spafford, your daughter Florence, is with her father taking care of her sick brother."

Mr. Kent rose to his feet. His voice trembled, but his eyes were sharp and clear as he put the question: "Are you sure, Michael? Is there no mistake?"

"No. No mistake. I heard him with my own ears declare himself to be Homer Spafford. And he raved of divorces, and slanders, and disgraces, and run on all about the past and the present and the future, in a most frightful way."

Mr. Kent, more as if addressing himself than speaking to Mr. Bryan observed :

“ To the physician, he is known as Mr. Milton.”

“ I don't care for that,” Mr. Bryan hastily exclaimed, “ Homer Spafford he is, and nobody else. Among the rest, he talked of second marriage and false name, and fleeing from known faces, and then went on in a way that made the very heart quake within me. You see he's raving and lets out all, which you never did much, as you pretended to trust me.”

“ But, Michael, I have never been raving,” was answered with mild and gentle dignity.

“ You all the time knew he was not dead ?”

“ I did.”

“ Did Leo and Clara ?”

“ No, they heard the report of his death and believed it. Later I informed Leo of the falseness of it ; to Clara I said nothing, and she still believes it.”

Mr. Kent had resumed his seat, and in a slow, mournful voice observed : “ You blame me, Michael, for not telling you, but I couldn't. It was not to keep any thing back from you ; but to go over all that poor woman was made to suffer, to particularize this last terrible wrong inflicted on her, was more than I could do. I told you, I believe, that he had left her, and that I, thinking it not right for

husband and wife to be separated, sent her and her children after him?"

"Yes, Mr. Kent, you ~~told~~ me that much, and then you stopped."

"Yes, I know I did. A spasm closed my throat and I stopped. It's hard, Michael, to go over, even to our friends, the wrongs that have been heaped upon us; especially is it trying when in telling them we have to own to the fierce attacks made upon our good name and character. How or in what way the report got out of his death, I do not know. It did not originate from Florence, and you may be sure I had nothing to do with it. As I told you, I sent Florence and the children after him. They met, and to her horror and agony she found his flight had not been alone, that—that—" he struggled for words, and his pure eyes looked troubled.

Mr. Bryan hastened to relieve his embarrassment. "I understand you," he said, "that Jezebel was with him."

"All I can say is, he was not alone, and already had he instituted proceedings for a divorce. Florence sought counsel and defeated them. Then she wrote to me, and such a wild, crazy letter it was. I went for her at once. The report was abroad of his death, and neither of us could bear to contradict it. To us he was emphatically dead and—"

"But," exclaimed Mr. Bryan, interrupting him, "how do you suppose the report got out?"

"I hardly know, Florence is firm in the belief that he started it himself. He suddenly disappeared from the place after the failure of the divorce, and then came news of his death."

"But as to Egan and you going west that winter: you don't know, Mr. Kent, how that worried Catharine and me and what black fears beset us." He did not mention the nature of his fears, he left it to his sagacity to find out. He thought it was not hard. It might not have been to some, but to Felix Kent it was unreadable as the scroll on an Egyptian tomb. Most pained, most shocked would he have been had it been made clear to him.

"Yes," he calmly replied, "I know you and Catharine were worried. You feared the journey, at that inclement season, would be too much for Florence in her feeble state, and may be, too, you had some suspicion of the cause of it."

"No, we didn't. We don't to this day know what it was."

"Well, then, I will now tell you. I said that Homer Spafford was dead to us, but we were mistaken. He was alive, and he made us feel it. About the middle of winter we learned that in another western state he had again made application for divorce in order to facilitate his marriage

with this woman. Florence was determined to resist it; she could not bear to have the disgrace on her poor children. I said something to dissuade her from it, and for the first time in her life she turned angrily upon me; and then pointed out the horrible slanders cast upon her, and her duty as a Christian, a daughter, a mother, to vindicate her character and prove her innocence, with such force that I confess, Michael, I was ashamed. I had tried to dissuade her from it, and felt as indignant and anxious as herself. I at once wrote to Egan and laid the whole matter before him. He came to my house, and with him came a legal friend of his, and together we proceeded to the west. It is needless to say Egan made short work of the divorce, and so thoroughly exposed Spafford that he saw it was useless for him again to attempt it. As he was doing a good business, and notwithstanding his recent failure seemed to be in a prosperous condition, he sued for a separate maintenance and forced him to settle upon her an annuity of twelve hundred dollars. This was the secret of my being able to pay you back so soon the money you had so generously loaned me, and to make those little improvements in our home. Since then the money has been regularly paid her, she uses a part of it to keep the boys in school, and the rest is put out for their after use. Florence never uses a cent of

it for herself. But you say this Mr. Milton, lying in a dying condition in this village, is he, Homer Spafford ?”

“I do, Mr. Kent, and horrible are the agonies he is suffering.”

“Do you think he would know me?”

“In his ravings he certainly would not, but in lucid intervals he might, probably would.”

Mr. Kent reflected. “I don’t know,” he said, “about telling Florence. I am afraid it would do no good ; only pain her without benefiting him.”

“But would you let him die without seeing her and acknowledging her as his wife.”

“But what good would that do, Michael?”

Mr. Bryan was thoroughly provoked. As great and good and noble as Felix Kent was, how like a very child he was in some things. What good would it do? Didn’t he know without asking? Couldn’t he see how much trouble it would save her in taking possession of his estate after his death. Were not she and those two boys his rightful heirs? Who else should have it? There would be enough to claim it; there always is, and she and they might have to go a long round about way before getting it, if there were not some steps taken to identify him, and have her acknowledged as his wife. For what else were they so strangely brought together at that momentous time? Sep-

parated for years, now they were both under the one roof, and neither knew of the others presence. What did that mean? Didn't it show plainly that our dear Lord meant restitution should be made to that poor, wronged woman? Of course it did, and he must see to it, and not let the mistaken tenderness of her father hinder the ways of justice. There was no time to be lost, he must be up and stirring. He rose to his feet, and in a hurried manner said :

“ Mr. Kent, I see a great deal of good it will do, and if you do not feel able to prepare her for the meeting, I will do it myself. I will step back to the hotel and tell her all about it. You need not fear, I will not do it roughly. I will talk round, and at the right time break the news to her. In the meantime you can go into the telegraph office and send on a despatch for the children. They should be got here as soon as possible.”

Mr. Kent was stunned, electrified with the suddenness and promptness of Mr. Bryan's words. Not a moment was given him to think the matter over. Act, act, that was the order of the master ; for master he had clearly determined to be. He looked up into the sturdy, inergetic face, and mildly remonstrated.

“ Michael, may not our haste betray hardness of heart ?”

Michael Bryan's answer to that question was an explosive "hut-tut." Hardness to whom? To one who had never known a tender or feeling throb, whose intense selfishness blasted the happiness of every one around. Hardness to him! He checked himself; he felt it necessary; his resentment would fast get the better of his humanity. He was sick, he was dying, and he did not want to be brutal or unfeeling, but at the same time while shunning real hardness of heart, he need not allow himself to be troubled with softness of brain. He must take the matter in hand and see that all was done as it should be. As he knew just what to do, and how to do it, in the sick room when the poor boys, George and Leo, seemed trembling on the verge of eternity, so now he went unerringly to work. He broke the news to Florence, and did it without violently shocking her; he brought about an interview between her and her husband; he took legal steps to have her claims acknowledged; he caused him to be known by his real name; he learned where his aged parents were, and had them sent for. Florence, in her christian charity, was mild and forgiving; a reconciliation was effected between husband and wife; a will drawn up in her favor; Homer Spafford's failures had been like many other failures in these progressive days, extremely profitable and money-making. His immense property

was secured to his wife and children; and this attended to, it seemed a heavy load was lifted from him. His mind became easier, and humbled and penitent he died. Felix Kent, in the gentleness and piety of his heart, compared him to the good thief on the Cross. Without contradicting him, Michael Bryan could not help thinking of Antiochus, and prayed God to save him and his from beginning a good life on the death-bed.

On George and Leo just escaping from a sick room, that death-bed made a lasting impression. The nothingness of the world, the importance of preparing for eternity, became their ruling thoughts. A great desire to labor for the salvation of souls took possession of them, and turning from the brilliant prospects opening before them, the former entered the theological seminary of T——, in order to prepare himself for the priesthood; the latter, so mild and compassionate, so much like his saintly father, entered the novitiate of the Christian Brothers. He felt how different a man would Homer Spafford have been, how useful and noble his life, how holy and peaceful his death, had he received the blessing of a Christian education in his youth; and henceforth his life was devoted to instructing the young.

Entering into the peaceful possession of her husband's property there was no change in Mrs.

Spafford's way of living. She still continued at her father's as plain and economical as in the days of her supposed widowhood. She was trying to do without it so as to be able to make restitution to his creditors or their heirs. She felt what would be left would rightly belong to herself and children. As her father had been one of the heaviest losers, she would have made the first returns to him, but he would not hear of it. "Wait, my child," he said, "till the others are paid, then you may think of me."

That Spafford was not dead at the time of Mr. Kent and Mrs. Spafford's journey west, Mr. Hascall knew, for he took it upon himself to learn the whole affair, and he went to them that would be able to tell him, his friend Egan and his partner. That he did not blame Mrs. Spafford, that he sincerely sympathized with her, and looked with compassion upon her unhappy lot, might be known by his active kindness, and the profound respect he always expressed for her. In moments of gentle exaltation of spirit, he had boasted he had a close head—it was the only thing he ever boasted of, and he threw such an air of stupidity over himself in doing it that people generally thought the reason he held his tongue was because he had nothing to set it agoing—but the admirable silence he maintained in regard to the Kent family secret

proved his boast was not altogether fanciful. Once however, he went so far as to say that the sorrow Mrs. Spafford and her family had seen by Spafford, he hoped would be a lesson to parents in letting their children marry only such as had the love and fear of God in their hearts; and it was noticed that his voice and manner had none of the old dead-and-alive way in saying it; that there was an earnestness, an intensity of feeling about him, that thrilled the heart of his listeners and left a lasting impression upon them. As his remark was applicable to Spafford, living or dead, it gave not the slightest hint as to his being still living. About a year after his death Jerome and Clara were married. He always believed he had the best and most gifted of wives, and she had no doubt that she had the kindest and most generous of husbands. Her father made his home with her, so she continued to have care of him; she still occasionally wrote a learned article, but never let literary labors interfere with her household duties. Henry Bryan, after graduating, returned, like a second Cincinnatus, to the farm. It was found his learning in no way clashed upon his being an excellent farmer, the thorough improvements he made, and his superior style of managing, put to blush the old fogies that had boasted Michael Bryan was spoiling his boys in sending them to school. He

married Seth Maxwell's eldest sister, and Mrs. Bryan had in her a kind and thoughtful daughter. Peter Cleary, happy in the realization of some of his brightest hopes, married the youngest sister, and installed her as mistress of one of the finest homes in Livy.

Felix Kent's charity and benevolence to Michael Bryan saved him from a miserable and degraded life, and raised him to one of usefulness and respect. In this world he received part of his reward—the hundred fold—for he proved an excellent friend in his day of trouble. The christian part Michael Bryan played with Seth Maxwell and his father, was the establishing the son in steady habits, and securing to two of his own children and his nephew a happy life-long union with a worthy and intelligent convert family. “Cast thy bread upon the running waters, for after a long time thou shalt find it again.”*

Eccles. xi. 1.

THE END.

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Felix Kent, or, The new neighbors / by M



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